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**An Enquiry into English as a Foreign
Language and Online Community
Projects in Secondary School Education**

Lesley June Fearn

Doctorate in Education

31st October 2020

Abstract

This study addresses the question of how Online Community Projects (OCPs), using specialised social-media platforms such as eTwinning, can support the learning and teaching of English as a Foreign Language in secondary school environments in Italy and in other countries. This was done by exploring students' language learning experiences as well as teachers' perceptions and decisions around integrating OCPs into their teaching.

With an overarching sociocultural perspective to language learning, this study draws largely upon concepts surrounding mediation and the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, (1997 [1978]) Legitimate Peripheral Participation and Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as well as theories in second language acquisition (Krashen, 2003; Krashen and Terrell, 1988). It employs a qualitative methodology blending Action Research (Burns, 1999) and a multi-case study consisting of five contrasting cases (Stake, 2006). Data were collected from an overall total of sixteen face-to-face interviews, twenty-one emails and sixty-six online open-question questionnaires. A thematic approach to analysis was adopted across all data sources.

Findings have revealed apprehensions and presumptions from teachers who do not utilise OCPs, while those who do use them not only explain the advantages and benefits, but also the challenges involved. Additionally, secondary-school students explain the strengths and weakness of the projects regarding their learning. This thesis provides a deeper insight into the understanding of young people's perspective on learning foreign languages through OCPs than has previously been available and will be of interest to teachers and researcher-practitioners who hope to improve their practice.

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Finally, my eternal gratitude goes to my mum and dad who would have loved sharing this experience with me.

Declaration of Authorship

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where otherwise acknowledged, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Acronyms

AR	Action Research
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
BERA	British Education Research Association
C1S	Case-one students
C2S	Case-two students
C3S	Case-three students
C4T	Case-four teachers
C5T	Case-five teachers
CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CBI	Content-Based Instruction
CBLT	Content-Based Language Teaching
CEFR	The Common European Framework for Languages
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CoP	Community of Practice
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EDMODO	Educational module
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ePals	A Global Community
eTwinning	European community

IATEFL	The International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
iEARN	The International Education and Resource Network
IELTS	The International English Language Testing System
INDIRE	L'Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa (The National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research)
INVALSI	Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione (Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of Education Systems)
IT	Information Technology
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MALL	Mobile-assisted language learning
MCS	Multiple Case Study
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
MIUR	Ministero dell'Istruzione Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Education, University and Research)
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
Moodle	Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment
NBLL	Network-Based Language Learning
OCP	Online Community Project
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PBLL	Project-Based Language Learning
PPP	Presentation-Practice-Production
PR	Progress Report
RSQ	Research sub-question
SCT	Sociocultural Theory

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Education Needs
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
TEFL	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
TES	Times Educational Supplement
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VE	Virtual Exchange
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research examines the perceptions of secondary-school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their students regarding their experience of integrating Online Community Projects (OCPs) into their curricula. It was motivated by the researcher's sustained professional curiosity about methods of learning and teaching EFL in secondary school education, especially those involving communication and technology. It builds upon the researcher's background as a secondary school EFL teacher in the South of Italy, and more specifically, an interest in the relationships EFL students and teachers have with OCPs as a tool for learning, communication, interaction and collaboration.

This study uses the term OCPs to describe school projects in collaboration with other schools located in other cities or countries. Numerous platforms provide cloud space and support for teachers who want to do OCPs with their classes, such as eTwinning, the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) and others. Still, this study will concentrate on the eTwinning platform while at the same time using the term OCPs to highlight the fact that they are not restricted to eTwinning. This fact is important because access to the eTwinning platform is limited to countries located in Europe or close by, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Republic of Moldova, Tunisia and Ukraine. Four of the seven OCPs completed during this study had space on other platforms as well as eTwinning, and two of these supported Erasmus plus mobility projects.

OCPs are potentially valuable tools for a variety of reasons discussed in Chapter two of this study. Still, for EFL teachers in secondary schools, they offer the possibility of using

English as the language of communication across countries and cultures. The onset and development of the Internet has provided unprecedented ways of language learning by using a variety of methods such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Davies et al., 2017; Lamy and Hampel, 2007), Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) (Hampel, 2006) and network-Based Language Learning (NBLL) (Akdemir, 2017), among others. OCPs can be a mixture of all of these or something else entirely.

An eTwinning OCP is usually initiated by one or more teachers who then invite teachers from other schools and countries to join them through the eTwinning platform itself. However, this can also be done via social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Times Educational Supplement (TES) or many others. The administrating teachers (or teacher) need to prepare an online area where participants can communicate and upload their work. Once the OCP space is ready, teachers collaborate to create activities to safely encourage their students to learn and experience new cultures by interacting with peers from other schools and countries (Gajek, 2018). The OCP homepage is fundamental to the success of the project. It needs to have a clear activity timeline and realistic goals, usually dealing with content related to the teachers' subject, or in the case of EFL, topics that are motivating to students.

A specific goal might be the collaborative construction of a learning object such as an eBook or a presentation (Dogoriti and Pange, 2014; Palloff and Pratt, 1999), so teachers can prepare tasks according to the sociocultural and educational settings of their learners. One advantage of using eTwinning for OCPs is that it operates on a protected network and is essential when working with minors. Various organisations provide safe platforms for

teachers internationally, such as the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). However, teachers can also make their own collaborative platform with any of the many protected digital tools available today, such as WordPress, Edmodo, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, Google Sites, Classroom, Loomio and so on. Therefore, this study has avoided constraining the focus to any one platform, though individual platforms may warrant specific research in the future.

The researcher has been teaching EFL in state Italian secondary schools in the south of Italy for over thirty years and often with poorly motivated students from disadvantaged social backgrounds. During this time, it became evident that students became more motivated when OCPs were integrated into the EFL curriculum and made progress in EFL and Information Technology (IT). In addition, the researcher's professional experience as a teacher developed and new methods and skills were acquired from the interaction and collaboration with colleagues in other countries. In the researcher's case, the exchange of expertise and experiences provided the incentive to try out new IT tools and teaching methods and helped increase self-confidence as a teacher. Despite these advantages, few EFL colleagues in secondary schools in the region use OCPs with their learners. Therefore, a review of the relevant literature was done to help understand more about this phenomenon.

Most European teachers using the eTwinning OCP platform in secondary education are Modern Foreign-Language (MFL) teachers, and more than half of the OCPs are in English (Gilleran, Pateraki, Scimeca and Morvan, 2017). However, research into the use of OCPs in secondary education concentrates on the global or technological aspects of learning, such as Gilleran (2019); Gajek (2018); Kearney and Gras-Velázquez (2018); Gulbay (2018); Gilleran et al. (2017); Camilleri (2016); Gouseti (2014; 2013); Chitanana (2012)

and Guarda, (2012). While these studies suggest that meeting and interacting with peers through OCPs can help improve foreign language learning and teaching skills, the researcher found little detailed research connected to EFL or MFLs in secondary school to date. Nevertheless, one of the fundamental aims of EFL teachers in promoting learning is to give students as much exposure to the target language as possible. A literature review also revealed a profound lack of research in the area of learning and teaching EFL in secondary education and state schooling in general (Collins and Muñoz, 2016), especially in Italy (Morgana and Shrestha, 2018). This shortage is regrettable because English is widely used globally for political and communicative reasons, resulting in EFL being ever more common as a subject in secondary school curricula around the world, especially within the European Union, where English is considered to be an essential language in education (Berns, 2020; Berns, 2008).

All OCPs in this study were hosted on the eTwinning platform and used EFL as the vehicle language among participants. The eTwinning platform was confined to teachers and students living and working in the European Union and some neighbouring countries at the time of this study. Therefore, some of the OCPs were distributed across platforms and websites that gave access to teachers living in other parts of the world, such as WordPress, Loomio and Flipgrid. However, the OCPs object to study in this enquiry were the parts that were hosted on eTwinning. This research incorporated seven different OCPs to offer a wide range of perceptions. For example, five lasted one academic year, while two of them accompanied Erasmus plus projects that continued the same two years as this study (see Section 5.2. and Appendices: A.3.; A.4. and D.14.).

As far as the tasks and activities were concerned, all seven OCPs followed a similar structure. First of all, a plan and timeline with suggested activities were given that

provided digital areas where students could post their work, such as Padlet or other collaborative software. At the end of the OCP, a final product was created such as a video, eBook or presentation. Finally, the OCP was evaluated by the participants using surveys or other evaluation tools. There was also a private area where teachers could share ideas and organise asynchronous communication sessions whenever timetables permitted. Activities and tasks were usually resourceful and analytic to adapt to the students' sociocultural contexts, interests, and ages. A significant aspect of OCPs, and central to this study, is that learners were motivated to take an interest in their peer's work and learn about other people and cultures. By doing so, they were expected to strive to use EFL as the vehicle language.

Although this study involved many participants from other schools and countries, the point of origin of this research was a group of students, aged fifteen to seventeen, and teachers of EFL in the Italian state secondary school where the researcher was working as a teacher. Therefore, a brief description of the state education system in Italy is necessary to contextualise this study at the time of this enquiry to show how and why OCPs could be introduced. Firstly, all upper-secondary education lasts for five years, from thirteen to fourteen until eighteen to nineteen years old. However, there are three distinct divisions in Italian state secondary education, each one offering a specific specialisation that will be the focus of the final state exam: a) *Licei*, which is the type of school where the researcher teaches and where this study is centred; b) Technical schools; c) Vocational institutes. Each of these three types of schools has various sub-sectors. The *Licei* offer a theoretical and cultural formation; technical schools concentrate on economy and technology while vocational schools give students the skills they need to do specialised work (INDIRE, 2019).

The Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa (The National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research), INDIRE (2014), describes the Liceo as general upper secondary education that offers six specialisations: ‘arts (liceo artistico), classical studies (liceo classico), sciences (liceo scientifico), languages [MFLs] (Liceo Linguistico), music and dance (liceo musicale e coreutico), human sciences (Liceo delle Scienze Umane)’ (INDIRE, p. 41). Guidelines for all school curricula are decided upon by the Ministry of Education. However, teachers are granted freedom to design their own syllabuses that fit within these guidelines as a ‘principle established by the Constitution of the Italian Republic’ (INDIRE, 2014, p. 37). One of the obligations Licei have to their students is to provide Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) to fifth-year students of all Licei and from the third to the fifth years of study in the Liceo Linguistico. CLIL is explained in more detail in the next chapter) (INDIRE, 2014). Teachers are also free to choose textbooks and teaching tools, but they need to be consistent with their curriculum and the school’s education offer plan.

Further flexibility lies in the periodic and annual assessment of students that ‘focuses on the learning process, their behaviour, and their overall learning outcomes’ (INDIRE, 2014, p. 52), which the teachers define and are therefore individual to each school. At the end of each year, the class council meets and decides, on the basis of individual marks, whether individual students can progress to the following year or repeat the same one. Upper secondary education usually lasts for five years. At the end of this period, students take an exam, which, if they pass, gives them a certificate and access to higher education (INDIRE, 2014). Another critical factor about Italian state mainstream education is that it is open to everyone. Therefore classes usually consist of students from different social and cultural backgrounds, including pupils with disabilities, with social and economic disadvantages and immigrants. Measures are taken to help students with special needs by

giving them a personalised and flexible curriculum and the help of specialised teachers when necessary (INDIRE, 2014). However, the reality is complicated, and academic evidence does not support mixed-ability classes in mainstream schools for all students, but education that supports each student's unique and individual needs (Anastasiou et al., 2015).

EFL is compulsory for all grades and in all types of schools in Italy. In secondary state education, students usually have three hours of English lessons per week, providing a total of circa four hundred and ninety-five hours during their five years of secondary education (European Commission, n.d.). The only exception to date is the Liceo Linguistico with an extra hour of EFL per week during the first two years of secondary school (grades ten and eleven), giving them four hours of EFL per week instead of the usual three. Therefore, students attending the Liceo Linguistico study a total of five hundred and sixty-one hours of EFL over the five years of secondary education (INDIRE, 2014) (see Appendices F.2. and F.3.). All students attending Licei are expected to reach a minimum level of B2, as described in the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR), by the end of secondary school education (18-19 years old) (Gisella, 2020). The school in this study is located in a rural village in the South of Italy and offers three options: a) The Liceo delle Scienze Umane that had one course; b) The Liceo Scienze Economico Sociale, also with one course; c) The Liceo Linguistico that had two courses at the time of the study. Altogether around four hundred students were attending this school in total. This study involves students from the Liceo Linguistico and the Liceo Economico Sociale.

As a teacher studying her own practice in the role of an 'insider' (a practising teacher or professional) researcher (Burton and Bartlett, 2005), this investigation draws on a qualitative Action Research (AR) paradigm while the research data are drawn from five

cases that constitute a Multiple Case Study (MCS): Case-one students (C1S) consists of twenty-six students from the Liceo Linguistico at the researcher's school; Case-two students (C2S) is made from twenty-five students from the Liceo Economico Sociale at the same school; Case-three students (C3S) contains fifty-seven students from other schools and countries (working on the same OCPs as C1S and C2S); Case-four teachers (C4T) comprises three EFL teachers from the researcher's school who do not use OCPs, and Case-five teachers (C5T) contains ten EFL teachers from other schools and countries (teachers living in various European countries, including Italy, and the researcher) who use OCPs. It is to be noted that all five multiple cases will be referred to in the third person singular form throughout this study.

This study responds to a gap in educational research by examining the effect of integrating OCPs into EFL curricula in secondary school settings on three levels. Firstly, it explores the perceptions of secondary school EFL students living in Italy (C1S and C2S) and from other schools and countries (C3S) and working together on the same OCPs at the time of this study. Secondly, it investigates the perceptions of their teachers, also living and working both in Italy and in other schools and countries (C5T). Thirdly, it includes the perceptions of a small group of Italian EFL teachers who had chosen not to include OCPs in their curricula although they all had had some experience in the past (C4T). The main research question and the study aims to find out:

How can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in secondary school settings?

To bring together the broad span of attitudes across the five cases, four Research Sub-questions (RSQs) were addressed:

1. How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?
2. How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?
3. Have teachers and students encountered any difficulties and drawbacks while using OCPs? If so, what were they?
4. How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum?

These questions motivate the qualitative AR methodology and MCS design frame employed in this enquiry and reflect on the ontological and epistemological viewpoints, that reality is individual to every individual and is socially constructed and shaped by language (Scotland, 2012). To answer the research questions, this enquiry draws largely upon sociocultural theory (SCT) (Vygotsky, (1997 [1978]), Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), Communities of Practice (CoPs) and Rogoff's work on guided participation, that all share the fundamental principle that people learn by participating actively in the presence of an expert or a slightly more advanced peer. The research design is framed within a sociocultural, social constructivist framework that reflects learning EFL as a situated social practise whereby people share a collective 'learning-partnership around a practice' despite working on different tasks and even living in other areas (Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p. 143). Throughout this study, the shared practice takes the form of an OCP. This research also takes the position that foreign languages are acquired more effectively when learners are provided with input that is interesting and managed in a relaxed learning environment (Ur, 2011; Krashen, 2003).

This thesis is structured in six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter Two, the *Literature review*, critically examines the most relevant literature in the field of OCPs

in secondary school EFL curricula, such as Virtual Exchange (VE) and telecollaboration. It also covers promotional materials and academic research on OCP platforms such as eTwinning and iEARN. Additionally, variations of CALL such as NBLL, online communication, blended learning, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are addressed in relation to OCPs and EFL. The second part of the literature review investigates some of the fundamental pedagogical theories in language learning: behaviourism such as Skinner (1957), cognitivism (Chomsky and Aronoff, 2011; Krashen, 2003), constructivism and social constructivism (Piaget, 1999 [1962]; Bruner, 1986), humanism (Farmer, 1978) and SCT (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929]) that includes literature on LPPs, CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and guided participation (Rogoff, 2003). Finally, the chapter investigates literature regarding teachers' continuous professional development and flexibility in secondary school EFL curricula while positioning and rationalising the ways in which OCPs can contribute to EFL learning development through a sociocultural lens.

Chapter three is the *Methodology* chapter and provides an outline of the methodological approach taken in this enquiry and the importance of theoretical framing in rationalising the perceptions of the participants. In this chapter, the choice of qualitative methodology is justified, and the value of 'insider' practitioner investigation is defended as a valid form of academic study. Next, this chapter provides an overview of AR methodology, and the three AR cycles that make up this study are described in detail following Burns's (1999) framework and drawing from Kemmis (1993, 2009, 2010), McTaggart (1994), Burns (1999), Stake (2006), Brydon-Millar and Maguire (2009), McAteer (2014) and others. In addition to AR, the MCS is discussed as the most appropriate design frame for this enquiry, and the five cases of the MCS are introduced and described as individual units sharing collective characteristics that make up what will subsequently be referred to as the

‘OCPCluster’ to emphasise the single identity of the MCS as a means of investigating the main research question. Also included in this chapter is a brief summary of the initial study that outlines the aspects that were carried forward into the primary research and further adjustments made during the investigation. At this point, the research questions are justified, and the choice of thematic analysis is presented as a flexible means of analysing data in relation to the unpredictable nature of AR enquiry. Finally, the study’s ethical framework, required when working both with minors and adults, is described together with the measures taken to secure the maximum reliability possible with a qualitative study.

The title of Chapter four is *Data and Analysis* and is divided into two parts. The first one gives information about the five cases making up the OCPCluster by describing and rationalising each data-gathering event, while the second part provides an in-depth description of the data analysis following a five-phase procedure adapted from Burns (1999) and is divided into five sub-sections. The first sub-section presents a detailed description of the methods used for assembling the dataset and defends the choice of Quirkos as a suitable qualitative data analysis software for this purpose; the second illustrates and rationalises the process of coding and the creation of codebooks; the third sub-section describes the merging of cases and the developing of themes while describing similarities and differences found within the dataset; the fourth depicts how themes and codes are further refined and modified in preparation for the fifth and final phase of Burns’ (1999) data-analysis procedure, which involves the reporting of outcomes and makes up Chapter five of this thesis.

Chapter five presents the *Findings and Discussions* of the analysis. First of all, it begins by addressing the work done on the seven OCPs over the three AR cycles making up this study. It will then go on to explore and analyse the findings organised under the four

research sub-questions. The first research sub-question examines how students believe their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs and is discussed under three themes: *Language and Communication Skills*, *Motivation* and *Learning Communities*. Excerpts from data collected from C1S, C2S and C3S are chosen and discussed. Findings relating to the RSQ 2 are addressed under the theme of *Professional Development* and include quotes and examples from C4T and C5T. RSQ 3 reflects upon the theme of *Difficulties*, examining and discussing excerpts taken from across all five cases. RSQ 4 considers how teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed through integrating OCPs into their curricula and is debated under three themes: *Language and Communication Skills*, *Motivation* and *Theoretical Perspectives*. Excerpts for this last RSQ were presented and analysed from C4T and C5T. After the four RSQs have been studied, the meanings are discussed.

Chapter six is the *Conclusions* chapter. It concludes the thesis by providing a concise answer to the main research question and then summarises and reflects upon the implications of the study as a whole. This includes reflecting upon the effectiveness of the qualitative AR paradigm and the MCS methods used. Successively, the limitations of the study are acknowledged, and areas of further research are recommended. Finally, the end of the chapter outlines the new understandings and knowledge that the study has contributed to the fields of EFL and OCPs in secondary-school settings.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review examines existing research in Online Community Projects (OCPs) and the learning and teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in secondary schools. A large and growing body of literature (Gajek, 2018; Gulbay, 2018; Kearney and Gras-Velázquez, 2018; Akdemir, 2017; Cassels et al., 2017; Cinganotto, 2017; Gilleran, 2017; Papadakis, 2016; Cook, 2014; Holmes, 2013b; Crawley et al., 2009; Gajek and Poszytek, 2009) has investigated the advantages of global and collaborative learning through OCP platforms such as eTwinning. However, little attention has been paid to how OCP learning methods can support the learning and teaching of EFL in a secondary school setting, which is the principal research question for this study. Finally, it is essential to note that the term EFL is used in this study because all participants live in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. This means that the English language does not have any recognised function within these countries, as when it is classified as a second language (L2) (Nayar, 1997).

This chapter is organised into seven parts. After the introduction, the second section documents the global nature of OCPs (Bourn, 2018) and their potential in secondary education concerning EFL and other Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). The remaining part of the section addresses current literature regarding OCP platforms and eTwinning in particular (Gilleran, 2019; Gajek, 2018). The third section documents literature regarding Virtual Exchange (VE) and telecollaboration (Dooly and O'Dowd, 2018; Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018) and discusses it in relation to the eTwinning platform (Camilleri, 2016). The fourth section is concerned with the use of technology regarding

OCPs and EFL such as Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT) in secondary school curricula (Lyster, 2011), Content Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), including Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) (Hwang, 2020; Kukulska-Hulme, 2018) and Network-Based Language Learning (NBLL) (Orsini-Jones, 2015; Kern and Warschauer, 2009), Online communication in the secondary-school EFL classroom (Schandorf, 2019; Stickler and Hampel, 2015; Warschauer, 1998; Sproull and Kiesler, 1991), Blended learning in secondary-school EFL learning and the potential of OCPs in this area (Grgurović, 2017; Gallardo, Heiser and Nicolson, 2011), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Thomas and Reinders, 2010; Ellis, 2003), Second Language Acquisition theory (SLA) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Wingate, 2016; Ortega, 2014; Ellis, 2003; Krashen and Terrell, 1988) and literature regarding motivation in relation to secondary-school EFL curricula (Wigfield, Cambria and Eccles, 2012).

The fifth section of this chapter describes the main pedagogical theories that have influenced MFL learning and teaching. For example theory in behaviourism (Pavlov and Anrep, 2003), cognitivism (Smith and Howatt, 2014; Chomsky and Arnone (2011), constructivism and social constructivism (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929]; Piaget, 1999 [1962]; Bruner, 1977), humanism (Farmer, 1978), sociocultural theory (SCT) drawing upon work on mediation and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by Vygotsky (2017 [1929]), Communities of Practice (CoPs) (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and guided participation (Rogoff, 2003). It then embeds the study within the conceptual framework of social constructivism and sociocultural theory (SCT). The sixth and final part of section five in this chapter examines scholarship regarding teacher-led and learner-centred approaches to teaching (Morgana and Shrestha, 2018; Ur, 2011).

Section six addresses literature relevant to teachers' continuous and professional development and the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) to comprehend how integrating OCPs into EFL curricula in secondary schools might be justified. The seventh section is the final one and concludes the literature review chapter. Finally, it is to be noted that this literature review was written before the COVID 19 lockdown. Therefore, the researcher has introduced some new literature that recognises the transformed use of synchronous communication apps and the situation when writing this thesis.

2.2. Education, Globalization and Online Community Projects in Language Learning

Abilities regarding relationships are often categorised under the term *soft skills*, an umbrella expression that is not only used to cover competencies including 'communication, teamwork, interpersonal skills, but [are] also linked to global skills.' These skills are essential for facilitating understanding and familiarisation with other cultures (Bourn, 2018, p. 98), and there has been a growing interest in the global potential of OCPs. However, a review of the existing literature has shown that little attention has been given to the important role played by EFL in their application to date. Globalisation has had a considerable impact on education. Many young people living in the twenty-first century global north have instant access to information from all over the world, providing alternative perspectives to problems and more dialogue among cultures and communities. For this reason, education is so crucial in providing learners with the skills they need 'to make sense of, and engage with, a global community and society' (Bourn, 2011, p. 28). Therefore, education systems are trying to develop and implement teacher-training

programmes to ensure that global skills are integrated into school curricula, including MFLs (Mercer et al., 2019).

A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) study identified three primary learning objectives and competencies in global education: ‘cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural’ (Nikolitsa-Winter et al., 2019, p. 9), or in other words, *to know; to be* and *to live together*. In the same vein, literature published by the United Nations (UN) sustains that ‘The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies’ (United Nations, 2015, p. 5). All the literature cited in this research supports the hypothesis that the study of MFLs, including EFL, is central to global education aims. For example, communicative goals and the need to create opportunities for interaction, either in the classroom or internationally (Mercer et al., 2019). Therefore, twenty-first-century education systems need to be aware of the changing world and the need for introducing adjustments to curricula (Bourn, 2011). These modifications need to encourage new skills by embracing technology, collaborative learning and interaction between people of different cultures and languages. The following sections will discuss the possible role that OCPs can play in this change.

2.2.1. The literature on Online-Community-Project platforms

What is known about OCPs is based mainly upon empirical studies that investigate their global and technological perspectives, such as Gilleran (2019), Gajek (2018), Kearney and Gras-Velázquez (2018), Cassels et al. (2017) and Chitanana (2012). However, these studies give little information about OCPs in the context of EFL or MFLs in general. In addition, the above-cited reports are mostly promotional ones, meaning that they aim to

raise public awareness of organisations such as the eTwinning platform rather than to pursue and add to a field of knowledge (such as the teaching or learning of EFL) in a neutral way (Anon, 2020). Some of the advantages taken from reports on OCP platforms such as the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) and eTwinning are listed below:

1. They offer the opportunity for underprivileged students to experience foreign cultures without the expense of travel (Gillera et al., 2017);
2. Students show an overall improvement in academic achievements after participating in eTwinning projects, including a decrease in the gap between economically deprived or underachieving pupils and their peers (Gillera et al., 2017);
3. Students and teachers' self-esteem and identity have been seen to have improved through working on eTwinning OCPs, resulting in better classroom relationships and motivation to do well (Kitade, 2014; Education for Change, 2012);
4. They offer teachers' online environments to find partners and develop school collaboration projects' (Crawley et al., 2009, p. 1);
5. They provide pedagogical support and help such as with training initiatives (Crawley et al., 2009);
6. They offer recognition and prizes such as the eTwinning Quality Labels (Crawley et al., 2009);
7. They provide lifelong friendships as well as support 'the development of twenty-first-century skills and competencies' (Cassels et al., 2017, p. 35);

8. eTwinning OCPs can ‘open a window to Europe through activities that promote the understanding of inclusion, the development of common values and a positive response to diversity’ (Gillera et al., 2017, p. 10);
9. Students are more motivated to learn, their attitudes towards schooling are improved, and their problem-solving skills boosted (Gillera, 2019; Gajek, 2018; Holmes, 2013).

All these advantages show an idealised picture of OCPs while at the same time giving little recognition to the importance of EFL. Moreover, the main weakness of this research is that it reflects the opinions of successful users of these platforms; therefore, it is biased and unbalanced. On the other hand, a review of academic literature in OCPs has raised some concerns. For example, teachers complain of the lack of time and skills necessary to develop and implement OCPs in the classroom, but schools often lack resources, especially those in disadvantaged areas (Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Gouseti, 2014).

Furthermore, Camilleri (2016) maintains that teachers are untrained in global education and often have difficulty completing projects due to a lack of functioning digital equipment or support within educational institutions and needed to communicate with peers living in other countries.

In addition to the global advantages, most of the previously cited studies have promoted OCPs, such as eTwinning projects, to learn foreign languages in general. However, this claim is founded on the assumption that people learn MFLs by interaction alone and lack reference to SLA theory. This study argues that this supposition does not justify integrating OCPs into EFL curricula because not all research into OCP communication has positive outcomes. For example, Gouseti’s (2014) study showed that although most students were generally motivated by integrating digital technologies, they felt that their activities lacked

interaction. Gouseti (2014) blames this on everyday practicalities, time restrictions and curriculum requirements. In addition, students were apprehensive about giving feedback to peers from other schools and countries. Therefore, the synchronised communication they did was compromised by technical problems and time issues.

In contrast, research by Nortcliffe (2012) explains how important feedback is for summative assessment. When students are encouraged to give anonymous feedback to peers, they are learning essential assessment skills that will be useful in evaluating the quality of their own learning. However, specific measures need to be taken to encourage successful peer assessment. For example, teachers need to take on a supportive, learner-centred role giving guidance and transparent criteria for evaluation; peer-groups need to be homogenous to avoid personality clashes such as discrimination or friendship bias. Finally, feedback needs to be anonymous (Nortcliffe, 2012).

Constructivist and SCT teaching approaches are central to learner-centred teaching (see Sections 2.4.5. to 2.4.6.). Virtual communities such as OCPs are good settings for these approaches (Johnson, 2006) because individual classroom experience is constructed by social, cultural and historical factors (Johnson and Golombek, 2018; Swain and Suzuki, 2008; Lantolf and Thorne, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; 2005). However, many ‘prototypical methods that are conceptualised by theorists, not those that are actualised by teachers in their classrooms’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2006 p. 36), do not recognise this factor and ‘are founded on idealised concepts geared towards idealised contexts’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2006 p. 37). For this reason, Kumaravadivelu (2006) indicates three parameters that need to be considered: 1) Particularity, 2) Practicality and 3) Possibility. Particularity highlights the sociocultural context of the learners and their teachers. Practicality emphasises the relationship between theory and practice because theory cannot

be considered helpful unless generated through practice. Finally, the parameter of possibility empowers learners and teachers by making them aware of their own individual, sociocultural contexts and encourages autonomous learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; 2001).

Despite the advantage of being method-free, Gouseti (2014) draws attention to difficulties caused by disparities in linguistic skills among partners in the eTwinning OCP in her study. However, her research focused upon technology, not EFL or MFLs, even though English was the language of communication. It involved EFL speakers attending a state secondary school in Greece and first language (L1) English speakers attending a similar school in Great Britain. Krashen (2003) argues that to encourage successful EFL acquisition, students need to be of a similar age and level of EFL. There are various reasons why it is better to match EFL learners with other EFL learners of similar abilities on OCPs rather than L1 English speakers. Firstly, Norton (2010) points out the demotivating power-relations between EFL learners and L1 speakers. Teachers often expect students to be motivated enough to strive to communicate with L1 speakers, despite difficulties in understanding discourse that is ‘too quick, too culturally loaded, too tightly intertextual’ or that ‘may draw liberally from textual sources and cultural content that students are not familiar with’ (Duff, 2010, p. 444).

Secondly, discourse used by L1 speakers is often very different to the way it is presented in some EFL textbooks used in secondary schools (Duff, 2010). Thirdly, there is a risk that students might feel embarrassed about not having sufficient language competence in the target language (Duff, 2010). Fourthly, theory on SLA confirms that input needs to be comprehensible for language to be acquired successfully (Krashen, 2003). However, less fluent EFL speakers might find English L1 speakers’ discourse challenging to understand.

EFL learners no longer need to depend on the Anglo-American L1 speaker model because there are almost two billion L2 English speakers globally, which is in contrast with less than four hundred million L1 speakers during work or travel experiences (Roos and Roos, 2019). Therefore, it is more likely that an EFL student will meet and speak to other L2 English speakers, using EFL as a lingua Franca, than they will L1 speakers (Gajek, 2018).

Gajek (2018) believes that motivation to learn inevitably leads to higher academic achievement and that students can be motivated by having fun collaborating with peers on eTwinning OCPs. On the other hand, Wingate (2016) points out that ‘fun’ lessons are not necessarily advantageous to language learning and that teachers have been ‘socialised’ into believing that studies need to be fun without being aware of the theoretical principles that set rise to this belief. She says that teachers work hard to provide ‘light entertainment’ (Wingate, 2016, p. 12) while trying to facilitate learning and motivate students, but this often means that EFL standards are lowered, and learners feel demotivated. It is essential to distinguish between entertainment and engagement. The former is associated with amusement and provided by performers, while the latter indicates that the learners’ attention is held in meaningful activities (Johnson, 2012). Likewise, Scott (2015) notes: ‘Language is learnt better if it is the student doing the work, not the teacher’ (Scott, 2015, p. 4). However, Wingate’s (2016) study is directed at MFL teaching in secondary schools, not at OCPs. Nevertheless, it is important to understand where the value of OCPs lies in the secondary school EFL curriculum. Are teachers wasting their time planning enjoyable activities on OCPs, or are they providing valuable learning experiences for EFL students?

Macaro, Handley and Walter (2011) note there is little evidence that using technology in language classrooms is beneficial to EFL or English as L2 learning and teaching. On the other hand, and relevant to this study, technology can positively influence learner attitudes

and behaviours and can help to promote collaboration (Macaro et al., 2011). Moreover, Maftoon and Shahini (2012) suggest that CALL has now been normalised in the language classroom, meaning that the value of technology has been recognised, but it has become ‘unremarkable in ELT settings’ (English Language teaching) (Maftoon and Shahini, 2012, p. 19). This study argues that although technology has been normalised in secondary school settings to a large extent, it has not been standardised for online communication as an EFL learning tool nor for OCPs. The relatively small amount of literature emphasises this factor in OCPs and EFL in secondary education (Morgana and Shrestha, 2018). However, technology can give EFL learners the means to interact with peers and teachers inside and outside of their classrooms and allow teachers to create collaborative and interactive activities (Li, 2013; Shrestha, 2012). The statistics published in the latest promotional eTwinning platform report show that more than half the teachers using the platform are foreign language teachers (Gilleran, 2019)

2.3. Virtual Exchange: Telecollaboration, OCPs and eTwinning

This section of the thesis outlines the characteristics of telecollaboration within the context of VE and OCPs. Telecollaboration is an umbrella term meaning ‘working together at a distance’ (Sadler, 2018, p. 217). Some scholars have described telecollaboration as having developed from pen-pal exchanges of the past (Dooly and O’Dowd, 2018; Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018): However, nowadays, it is the connection and communicative interaction of learners living in different geographical locations through using online communication tools rather than pen and paper (Dooly and O’Dowd, 2018). Tools can be synchronous and asynchronous video conferencing tools, such as Skype, Zoom, Meet and so on. Telecommunication aims to construct knowledge through communication and

communicative approaches based on content rather than on language structures, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) or Content-Based Instruction (CBI)/CLIL (Dooly and O'Dowd, 2018).

The philosophy supporting telecollaboration is that learners 'can improve their proficiency in a foreign language and acquire intercultural communicative skills' (Clavel-Arroitia, 2019 p. 483). Telecollaboration is also said to have the power to make a difference in education because communicating with overseas peers can help students understand and become friends with 'the other' (Sadler, 2018). Another significant value of telecollaboration lies in the pedagogical approach underlying the learner-centred activities (see Section 2.4.6.) (Mont and Masats, 2018). This fact is crucial because 'Most curricula around the world reveal there has been a shift in how learning is conceptualised today' and encourages 'content-based input and competence-based output' with the learner taking centre-place (Mont and Masats, 2018, p. 93). García-Martínez and Gracia-Téllez (2018) believe that the principal reason that Spanish students only reach a CEFR (The Council of Europe, 2018) level of A2 when they take their 'A' levels is that curriculums are focused on accuracy and grammar rather than on using the language as in telecollaboration projects. Sadler (2018) also claims that they are 'always a learning process for both the students involved in them and for their teachers as well' (Sadler, 2018, p. 218).

Despite these arguments for the use of telecollaboration in secondary school EFL curricula, it is still relatively uncommon (Dooly and O'Dowd, 2018) for various reasons. For example, a) Telecollaborative exchanges take considerable extra time to plan and organise (Mont and Masats, 2018; Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018); b) Students, teachers or schools might not have adequate digital resources (Dooly and O'Dowd, 2018); c) Often, teachers are not comfortable working with other teachers and prefer to work alone (Sadler,

2018); d) Many teachers have difficulty in adapting telecollaboration projects to the official curricula (Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018). When teachers are obliged to design curricula that produce measurable outcomes, they are more likely to have difficulty adopting telecollaborative projects because online communication skills are not easily assessed (Ware and Kessler, 2014).

Although OCPs can be considered a form of telecollaboration, this study has identified two main differences. Firstly, the above literature has shown the lack of a central community space in telecollaboration projects necessary for OCPs. As mentioned in the previous section (Section 2.2.1.), an example of an OCP platform is eTwinning, but scholars researching telecollaboration in this study have only noted eTwinning as a cloud space where teachers can find colleagues with whom to do projects, and there is no mention of Twinspace or any other communal platform in the literature covered in this study. On the other hand, the tools mentioned are Google drive (Ingelsson and Linder, 2018), virtual environments such as Gaming (Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018), Skype in the Classroom and Facebook (Bruun, 2018), none of which provide community spaces or platforms. Therefore, teachers using telecollaboration in their lessons often prefer to collaborate with a small number of fellow teachers because it is easier to organise communicative exchanges with fewer participants. This is because careful planning and preparation is important to the success of telecollaboration and requires a considerable amount of extra time (García-Martínez and Gracia-Téllez, 2018; Mont and Masats, 2018, Sadler, 2018). However, specialised platforms, such as eTwinning, can host large numbers of participants and make organisation much easier for OCP administrators (Crawley et al., 2009). Another reason why teachers using telecollaboration do not use private platforms

such as eTwinning could be because telecollaboration usually involves university students and not those attending secondary schools (Pennock-Speck, and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018).

Secondly, projects in telecollaboration seem to be more tightly bound to developing communicative competence, while OCPs tend to focus on creating a more comprehensive range of skills. Thus, telecollaborative projects focus upon and are geared towards the moments in which students make contact, either synchronously or asynchronously (Dooly and O'Dowd, 2018; Pennock-Speck and Clavel, 2018). Communication is fundamental to learning EFL and any language, as explained in more detail in Section 2.3.2.4. of this thesis. However, creating a community is the primary motivation behind OCPs, whereby communication is predominantly a social activity (see Section 2.4.5.). The community space is central to OCPs, where any number of teachers and students can collaborate and socialise because although communication is essential, it is not the focus of the project as with telecollaboration. This means that there is less pressure on the teacher to control the language structures predicted for the moment in which the students meet. Therefore, they can be more flexible with assignments and organisation.

The Italian National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE-L'Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa) states that the six main reasons for using eTwinning as an OCP platform are: 1) collaboration and socialisation; 2) new teaching methods and approaches; 3) multicultural context; 4) teachers' professional formation and development; 5) motivation and recognition; 6) privacy and ethical safety (INDIRE, 2020). However, it does not mention the advantages it offers to EFL and other foreign or L2s. This study is concerned about this detail and aims to bridge the gap in the literature regarding eTwinning as a tool for EFL learning and teaching and alert EFL and MFL teachers to the potential of integrating OCPs

into secondary-school MFL curricula. All OCPs in this study have space on the eTwinning platform because it is well established and well known within the EU, and easily accessible (Kampylis, Bocconi and Punie, 2012). However, is it possible to create OCPs with any digital space so this study does not confine the investigation to the eTwinning platform.

Before the introduction of eTwinning in 2005, VE partnerships in the EU were unusual (Helm, 2018). Since then, various enterprises have encouraged VE, for example, Erasmus plus programmes. Helm (2018) suggests that policymakers are interested in VE because of the sustainability of the projects and platforms. VE has been described as a form of ‘soft power [that] is often used with positive connotations – usually by those wielding power, who see it as a tool for securing their influence overseas – by non-military means’ (Helm 2013, p. 53). For this reason, Helm (2013) suggests that teachers break away from ‘safe’ topics that are traditional in EFL curricula and even more common in telecollaboration, where conflict is avoided, and polite, politically correct behaviour is encouraged. Moreover, Helm (2013) says that conflict needs to be addressed if a change is to happen. However, mediation is fundamental to the success of interaction regarding divisive issues and the programme that Helm (2013) employs experts trained in mediation and involves adult learners in higher education.

Additionally, the conditions for encouraging transnational conflictual issues cannot be met in many secondary school settings, and caution needs to be taken with adolescent learners (Camilleri, 2016). Politeness and political correctness need to be prioritised and not neglected as ‘barriers to dialogue’, as suggested by Helm (2013, p.38). Nevertheless, as far as MFLs are concerned, VE reflects the twenty-first-century interest in sociocultural aspects of L2 education and is generally referred to as telecollaboration, also coming under the umbrella term of CALL (O’Dowd, 2018).

2.4. Technology, Online Community Projects and Language learning

This section begins with CBLT and progresses to CALL and some of its derivatives, which in the case of this study are: CMS; NBLL; online communication; blended learning and TBLT. These fields are necessary because ‘While the evolution of computer technology can be described in a relatively linear and organised fashion, SLA and language pedagogy have developed as a disorganised, multipronged and often contradictory collection of notions and practices’ (Davies, Otto, and Rüschoff, 2017, p. 19). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that technology in the foreign language classroom can help teachers create authentic learning situations in line with social constructivist philosophy (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky. 2017 [1929]). Combined with the Web, it presents an excellent basis for genuine communication in English (Li, 2013).

2.4.1. Content-based-second language teaching

Projects on OCPs are primarily based on content, and so they can be described as a form of CBLT. CBLT is well matched to language classes that use social constructivist tools while taking the position that ‘language development and cognitive development go hand in hand’ (Lyster, 2011, p. 611) rather than concentrating on the technical practice of the target language and ignoring content. There is much research into different ways of using CBLT, such as Nation and Webb (2011), Lyster (2011), Gibbons (2003) and so on. Programmes such as Immersion and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can be considered under the umbrella term of CBLT. This is because both imply teaching a subject in a language that the students learn as an L2 or foreign language (Gibbons, 2003). However, research into these forms of CBLT shows that despite participating actively in

the ‘construction of language and curriculum knowledge’ (Gibbons, 2003, p. 247), unless students are provided with linguistic instruction, they will lack L2 accuracy (Lyster, 2011). This was proven to be true even after many years of French immersion in Canada, confirming Krashen’s (2003) theory that students need both communicative practice and formal grammar instruction. However, the latter is applicable only when they are at the right age and are ready for it. This is because it will satisfy students’ curiosity about the structure of the language and fill in gaps in partial acquisition (Krashen, 2003).

On the other hand, neither CLIL nor immersion courses are designed for language teachers. Lyster (2011) describes the teaching of content by language teachers as ‘sheltered instruction’ (Lyster, 2011, p. 612) because language teachers are unlikely to be experts in the subject matter. Therefore instruction and texts need to be modified and simplified to enable understanding of the material. In contrast, Nation and Webb (2011) say that CBLI instruction should use unsimplified, unmodified texts intended for L1 speakers of English. When EFL students read authentic texts that lead them to focus on the meaning rather than the language, not only their awareness of the content-vocabulary will be increased as with sheltered instruction, but all other areas of language and discourse will develop too (Nation and Webb, 2011). This study argues that OCPs can provide a platform for teachers to organise shared tasks for their students with a content learning focus and provide opportunities for language learning. Moreover, this is more likely to be possible when using vast databases provided by the World Wide Web rather than with the simplified language used in EFL textbooks and coursebooks. This is an important fact since CLIL is compulsory in all Italian *licei*.

2.4.2. Computer Assisted Language Learning and Computer-Mediated Communication

Hampel (2006) points out that CALL has been surpassed by CMC and applications based on the Internet. However, although nowadays they are both well-established terms, CMC is used to refer to all types of interaction among human beings that are mediated by electronic devices, even smartphones and tablets (McArthur, Lam-McArthur and Fontaine, 2018a), while CALL is specific to learning (Maftoon and Shahini, 2012). Therefore, although the term CALL is used predominantly in this study, it is an umbrella term to cover other technological means and devices. As OCPs need at least some technology to connect to other schools globally, this study can be listed under the umbrella term of CALL despite little specific research having been found to date. However, although this study recognises its connections to CALL, it is more interested in the Sociocultural themes of activity, collaboration, communication and the social environment than the technological or social media aspect.

Hubbard (2017) defines theory in CALL as: ‘the set of perspectives, models, frameworks, and specific theories that offer generalisations to account for phenomena related to the use of computers and the pursuit of language learning objectives, to ground relevant research agendas, and to inform effective CALL design and practice’ (Hubbard, 2017, p. 14).

However, the term has not been found to extend to OCPs to date. Studies such as Chun (2011) shows how technology CALL can be helpful in the language classroom, but that success is individual to each learner. It also indicates the potential that social networks have in CALL. However, many studies such as Medina and Roperio (2017); Chun et al. (2016); Maftoon and Shahini (2012); Shrestha (2012); Benson and Chik (2011); Chun

(2011) agree that technology should be used as a tool for language learning and teaching and not as a focus, yet it is still the motivation of their studies.

It is also important to note that CALL research usually involves older students in higher education, even though quality education is a fundamental human right and that ‘the ability and skills to communicate, including through technology’ are crucial to ‘the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity’ (Murphy, 2019, p. 31). This study argues that students attending secondary schools have very different agendas to those in higher education and need to be considered differently. For instance, in global state education, not all schools can provide their students with access to technology. For example, various OCPs were done recently by the researcher with schools in the EU whose classes had no devices. In these cases, students took turns using the teacher’s own computer to post their work.

Additionally, it cannot be taken for granted that all young people own communication devices, even though some academics such as Nakashima, Aghajan and Augusto (2009) say that they seem to. The lack of communication tools is not the only source of global inequality and exclusion; Jones (2015) points out that most of the world’s population is not connected via the Internet. In fact, the UN is struggling to decrease global inequality through the Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDGs) 2030 agenda. But warns that:

‘The deployment of new technologies can exacerbate inequalities instead of reducing them, even in contexts of broad accessibility. Gaps in education can widen, for instance, if new technologies primarily benefit those pursuing tertiary education, or if they disproportionately improve the learning outcomes of children in wealthier households’ (United Nations, 2020, p. 7).

This emphasises the fact that more academic and political attention is needed in the state school sector. It is important that all young people have access to both education and technology. For instance, the UNESCO promotes ‘transforming learning and teaching through technology’ (UNESCO, 2015, p. 19). It states that providing young people with quality education ‘is central to sustainable development and constitutes the pathway to a life of dignity for all’ (UNESCO, 2015, p. 11). Therefore, authorities need to invest in their school systems and provide technology for all students.

Technology is a key consideration in the development of learning and teaching EFL. Academics have always been quick to take advantage of technology in the foreign language classroom, from audio equipment in the 1980s to CALL (Davies et al., 2017; Lamy and Hampel, 2007) in the 1990s and CMC (Hampel, 2006) and Network-Based NBL (Akdemir, 2017) in the last decade. However, many of these teaching approaches put technology at the centre-place of learning (Bax, 2011; Bax, 2003). For example, scholarship in CALL now embraces social websites that support sharing and collaboration. This transition has been augmented by the fundamental role Internet plays in many people’s lives (Motteram and Stanley, 2011). This study maintains that human interaction and communication are important factors in EFL acquisition. Accordingly, technology and the Internet are valuable tools for encouraging and facilitating communication and generating socially constructed knowledge (Gajek, 2018). In addition, using CALL and CMC with OCPs can provide teachers with an opportunity to learn which methods and tools are useful both for themselves and for their students. In this way, socialising and collaborating with other teachers in the community can help them feel less isolated (Johnson and Golombek, 2018; Johnson, 2006).

International research into the area of technology has identified some practical reasons as to why MFL teachers, including those teaching EFL, refuse to use technology in their lessons (Maduabuchi, 2016; Chigona, 2014; Gouseti, 2013; Maftoon and Shahini, 2012). Maduabuchi (2016) suggests that they are afraid of ‘losing control’ (Maduabuchi, 2016, p. 4) because students are easily distracted by other websites or become over-enthusiastic with the activity and do not listen to their teachers. Also, teachers complain that their students do not behave well when having to share devices when there is not enough equipment for large classes (Chigona, 2014). Moreover, the lack of functioning equipment and technical support is often an issue in state secondary schools where teachers do not want to waste time when hardware doesn’t work, or the Internet connection is not strong enough to support the lesson (Maduabuchi, 2016; Chigona, 2014; Maftoon and Shahini, 2012).

Another reason that teachers may not want to incorporate ICT in their lessons is that adolescents are not always as technology savvy as expected, and teachers often have to spend so long teaching students how to use the technology that the EFL learning gets overlooked (Gouseti, 2013). Additional time gets wasted when students lose their OCP log in details or have difficulties navigating social media explicitly made for education, such as eTwinning. All these factors, plus work commitments and pressures, are making teachers choose not to integrate technology or OCPs in their lessons (Maduabuchi, 2016; Chigona, 2014; Gouseti, 2013). Research has shown that skills in all subjects can be improved by integrating ICT into lessons, but this is not always happening (Maduabuchi, 2016; Røkenes and Krumsvik, 2016; Warschauer, 2009; Townsend and Bates, 2006). This is often because technology is limited to facilitating and speeding up traditional routine tasks that were already being done without the introduction of ICT or the Internet. For

example, content delivery, planning lessons, private communication, writing, searching for information and using tools for presentation (vanOostveen, Desjardins, and Bullock, 2019; Morgana and Shrestha, 2018; Røkenes and Krumsvik, 2016; Dooly and Sandler, 2013; Gouseti, 2013; Chitanana, 2012).

As noted earlier, UNESCO (2015) encourages secondary education curricula worldwide to use technology to transform learning and teaching. However, new uses for technology need to be adopted (Akdemir, 2017; Dooly, 2015; Gouseti, 2013). OCPs could be the answer, according to Papadakis (2016), because ‘eTwinning aims to promote new and innovative ways for ICT use in European schools’ (Papadakis, 2016, p. 2) and eTwinning is a platform for OCPs. Schools indisputably need to take advantage of the benefits of digital technologies to modernise learning and teaching practices because students use them outside the classroom all the time. For example, ‘by the age of 21, a young person may spend 15 thousand hours in formal education, 20 thousand hours sitting in front of a TV and 50 thousand hours in front of a computer screen’ (Gajek, 2018, p. 7).

In order to encourage effective EFL acquisition, Hampel (2006) suggests combining ‘electronic literacy’ and constructivist ways of learning (Hampel, 2006, p. 112). In fact, OCPs function with social constructivist approaches that draw upon diverse sociocultural backgrounds through interactive learning activities (Mutekwe, 2014). However, in applying these approaches, actions do not always evolve as the teachers had planned (Hampel, 2015). For this reason, communication and online socialisation need to be facilitated so that lessons are learner-centred, concentrating on language, creativity, choice and style rather than technology (Stickler and Hampel, 2015).

However, incorporating technology into a curriculum can be difficult and often involves a range of real-world tasks that are never neutral (González-Lloret, 2017). In fact, when put to the test during the Covid 19 emergency, countless teachers working in secondary state schools found the transition to online lessons difficult. Some of the reasons were the lack of expertise on the part of the staff (both in the area of online teaching methods as well as with the digital tools themselves), non-friendly tools and unrealistic expectations from school authorities (Schwartz, Shimabukuro, Meyers, Gautschi, Bernardi, Spelic, Sorensen, Robinson, and Carlson, 2020). Despite this fact, and due to the pandemic, learning contexts in many countries embraced online classes, and students used mobile devices to access their classmates and lessons (Ali, Mahmood, Anjum and Shahid, 2020). The next section will discuss the impact of mobile devices on language learning.

2.4.2.1. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Although Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can be considered as a form of CALL, Kukulska-Hulme (2018) says they are quite different because instead of using a computer in a fixed space, such as a classroom or an office, whereby users need to stay in the one place, mobile technologies provide the opportunity to learn anywhere and at any time. MALL devices include ubiquitous devices such as mobile phones, tablets, audio players, eBook readers and portable game consoles and can be used for almost any kind of language learning, from grammar exercises and drills to collaboration and communication (Kukulska-Hulme, 2018). This can be done through access to the Internet and one of the many apps available to language learners. However, learners need to understand how to use their apps for language learning because some learners do not think of their mobile devices as learning tools. For this reason, teachers should encourage their students to use their mobile devices outside of school so that they can become lifelong learners instead of

limiting learning to formal classroom settings (Rossell-Aguilar, 2016). In fact, MALL scholars predict that it is the future of language education and that smart systems will converge and replace older methods (Kukulska-Hulme, 2018; Mobinizad, 2018).

However, research has shown that there are still many difficulties that need to be overcome before MALL is mainstream in EFL curricula. For example, teachers see their lack of control over their students' learning as a threat (Kukulska-Hulme, 2018; Mobinizad, 2018). In addition, Shadiev, Liu and Hwang's (2020) research found that students in higher education lacked the autonomy and discipline to manage e-learning on their own and often dropped out of their courses for this reason. Teachers are also worried about the risk of procrastination offered by mobile devices, seeing them as sources of distraction and making it unlikely that they try to include them in their lessons (Mobinizad, 2018). Other disadvantages include the small screen size of many mobile devices that render them difficult for some people with disabilities to use or to see. Also, not all learners can afford the more modern and powerful devices (Kukulska-Hulme, 2018; Mobinizad, 2018). Finally, as Mobinizad (2018) points out, there is a definite lack of theory regarding MALL, but its potential in the language classroom is undeniable.

2.4.2.2. Network-Based Language Learning

Much of the literature in this review has emphasised the significance of using social constructionist teaching methods. Nevertheless, distance learning, digital technologies and OCPs are all part of today's network society and has resulted in the inevitable change in the way learning is required. In fact, although NBLL can be considered a form of CALL, in reality, it is a social constructivist version of it (Orsini-Jones, Lloyd, Cribb, Lee, Bescond, Ennagadi and García, 2017). In fact, Orsini-Jones (2015) explains that learning

can no longer be limited to the retaining of information as it was in the past, but learners require abilities to distinguish what is important from amongst the vast amount of information available to learners today on the worldwide web.

NBLL not only gives EFL learners the means to socially and actively construct knowledge from their experiences of the virtual world, but they are more likely to become intellectually involved when they are working on interesting and meaningful activities and projects (Orsini-Jones et al., 2017). Ultimately, a fundamental feature of NBLL is its global nature (Orsini-Jones, 2015), and it is this that enables OCP participants to reach peers and colleagues in schools situated all over the world. It is also one of the reasons why the capacity of OCPs and EFL deserve more scholarly attention. Additionally, an OCP in an NBLL environment can provide a setting for forming a sociocultural CoP. In fact, Farnsworth et al. (2016) believe that a CoP ‘can arise in any domain of human endeavour’ (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 141). The notion of a CoP was devised by Lave and Wenger (1991) and set within the context of learning as a situated activity. Central to this theory is Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), which, when applied to EFL, explains how a beginner becomes a proficient user by ‘becoming a full participant’ in a sociocultural ‘community of knowledge and practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). The concept of CoP is significant to this study and is described in more detail later on in this chapter (see Section 2.5.5.3.).

2.4.3. Online Communication in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom

Online communication is central to OCPs, whether it is online or offline and can be both synchronous and asynchronous. The former is when all users are logged on together,

interacting and communicating instantaneously and in real-time. Examples of text-based communication can be chat rooms, video calls or messaging systems and can be a combination of spoken words and text. The latter involves delayed communication features such as electronic mail systems or video recordings (Schandorf, 2019).

Some scholars say that processes of face-to-face methods cannot easily be reassigned to online environments (Stickler and Hampel, 2015). For example, it is not only difficult to make eye contact when communicating online but being unable to see facial expressions and body language makes it difficult to demonstrate understanding, approval, the signalling of the right moment to speak and so on. The absence of these signals can lead to insecurity and lack of confidence, and therefore special attention is needed in order to overcome these issues (Shetzer and Warschauer, 2009; Hampel, 2006). On the other hand, text-based online interaction has advantages over face-to-face communication because it is more democratic regarding input (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991). It 'reduces social context clues related to race, gender, handicap, accent and status, which sometimes reinforce unequal participation in other types of interaction' (Warschauer, 1998, p. 61). It also gives students time to reflect upon their input and thus giving shyer students a voice among more self-confident people (Warschauer, 1998).

An advantage of asynchronous communication, however, is that EFL learners can spend time deciding upon the best way to approach the task at hand (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991). On the other hand, negotiation can only be effective in synchronous communication, and many asynchronous approaches such as emails lack a predisposition for collaborative discourse (Christiansen, Li and Bailey, 2017). The benefits of asynchronous communication in language learning have been demonstrated by Kitade's (2014) classroom study of asynchronous CMC (texts, social media, OCPs, emails and so on) that showed

how collaborating students adapted their language to suit their partners' levels and succeeded in producing higher-quality writing than the students who worked alone or without the guidance of a teacher (Young-Scholten, Herschensohn, and Ohta, 2013).

Although these aspects are beneficial to all users, text-based discourse can be especially valuable to MFL learners, including EFL ones. This is not only true for developing writing skills but also for speaking ones. In fact, research has shown that EFL students who use chat room features can significantly advance their oral fluency (Baradaran and Khalili, 2009). This improvement is due to similarities between text-based and face-to-face verbal interaction. For example, a chat conversation is both instant and interactive, and many platforms give the option of voice recorded messages as well as text ones (for example, SMS, Skype, Viber and WhatsApp and so on). It allows interaction in an authentic context without being constrained by location. Moreover, gestures, tone and emotions are not lost with chat processes because they can be replicated by using Emojis or Emoticons (Schandorf, 2019).

Chatting is not only similar to face-to-face communication but Baradaran and Khalili (2009) believe it to be more beneficial to MFL and EFL learners for numerous reasons. Firstly, students are more likely to express themselves freely without the usual anxiety over making mistakes. Secondly, this sense of security makes students feel encouraged to spend more time in text conversation than they would do conversing face-to-face in EFL with their peers or their teachers in the classroom. Thirdly, all learners can participate in a discussion using text-based communication. This would not be possible in a real classroom because if all learners wanted to give their opinions at the same time, they would be incomprehensible. Finally, students (or teachers) can return to the discussion and learn from it later (Baradaran and Khalili, 2009). However, text-based communication is

sometimes seen as damaging to literacy development because of influences from popular culture. Thus, it is considered ‘wrong, ungrammatical and inappropriate’ (Christiansen et al., 2017, p. 2). This is because the language used in chatting and texting follows the morphosyntactic conventions of the spoken word, as noted in the previous paragraph (Schandorf, 2019; Baradaran and Khalili, 2009), and not the ones taught at school.

Many teachers believe that traditional literacy conventions are the only ones that are valid. Instead, as Christiansen et al. (2017) point out, text-based discourse should be taught in EFL curricula at school because it would not only help students to recognise ‘orthographic principles of representation’ and comprehend the values of form and structure, but it would also guide them into having a richer ‘awareness of communicative norms in multiple digital spaces, which enables increased complexity [...] of communication and can assist in academic performance and socialisation’ (Christiansen et al., 2017, p. 2). In consequence, this study has argued the value of including synchronous and asynchronous online communication in the EFL curriculum. However, the problem remains of finding people with whom to communicate and means of authentic interaction. Participation in OCPs can provide teachers with a means of contacting other EFL speakers of similar ages but who speak different L1s to their own students and with whom they can interact in authentic contexts (Alajarmeh and Rashed, 2019; Wells, 2006). Considering all this evidence, it seems that academic research into OCPs and EFL might contribute to theory in NBLL and the learning and teaching of EFL in secondary education.

Finally, it is important to note that since the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of synchronous communication apps such as Zoom, Meet and Teams, have been used much more widely than in the past, and for this reason, it might be argued that the literature discussed in this review is outdated. In fact, video conferencing tools have become normalised in the

workplace, producing increased flexibility and productivity (BBC, 2021). However, research has shown this has not happened in many secondary schools and universities, despite their having many of the prerequisites necessary for successful online learning and synchronous communication (Bojović, Ž., Bojović, P. D., Vujošević, D. and Šuh, J., 2020). For this reason, this study argues that synchronous communication is not yet normalised in secondary school education at the time of the study, and more research is necessary.

2.4.4. Blended Learning in the Secondary-School English as a Foreign Language Classroom

Most academics see blended environments as a blend of face-to-face and online activities (Grgurović, 2017; Zaka, 2013; Motteram, 2006). However, Nicolson et al. (2011) say it can also be other kinds of combinations, such as a mixture of web-based technologies without face-to-face interventions or even a combination of pedagogical methodologies such as constructivism, cognitivism and so on. Combining some of the approaches described in this thesis can be considered a blended approach to learning. OCPs are potentially effective contexts for a blended approach to learning and teaching where teachers with different beliefs and teaching methods can pool their approaches and create new ideas and theory (Gallardo et al., 2011). Some academics believe that blended learning is already a normalised practise in higher education, especially in postgraduate studies (Grgurović, 2017; Motteram, 2006). However, this study argues that this is not the case for many secondary schools over the world. There is also very little research into blended learning in secondary education (Bukhari, 2016). This is because there are still many schools with insufficient resources worldwide (as explained previously). Nevertheless, blended learning is predicted to be the predominant teaching method of the

future. It is expected to transform education from paper to smart devices (Grgurović, 2017; Bukhari, 2016).

Combining online and face-to-face teaching in EFL secondary school instruction has proven to be much more successful than just the former or the latter alone without blending (Grgurović, 2017). This was evident during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, where many education systems believed that online self-guided learning could resolve the teaching problems during lockdown (Werner, 2020). Instead, many young people lacked the incentive to study without peer pressure, the teacher or a structured learning institution. For this reason, blended learning could be the answer. However, few schools had adapted to blended learning before lockdown and students attending schools with fewer resources or located in underprivileged areas risked falling even more behind. For this reason, both teachers and students need more training in computer-literacy skills (Grgurović, 2017). It is possible that OCPs could assist in this training, and therefore enquiry into the potential of blended learning using OCPs in teacher training programmes would be helpful.

2.4.5. Task-Based and Communicative Approaches to English as a Foreign Language.

Although TBLT is not a CALL approach, it is embraced by CALL academics because it is considered helpful in reaching the potential of technological advances in language acquisition (González, 2017). This is because of its relationship to CLT that emerged in the 1960s due to more traditional grammar focused approaches to teaching (Littlewood, 2011). The fundamental principle was that EFL teaching needed to focus on the learner's reality and communication outside of the classroom (Littlewood, 1981). Since then, it has had an enormous influence on EFL, both in theory and in practice (Ju, 2013). Savignon (2007)

says that CLT has become a keyword in EFL teaching discussions. This is primarily due to the rapidly changing context of language learning by the emergence of English as a global language, technical innovation and the demand for learner autonomy. EFL teachers need to plan curricula that will reflect the sociocultural contexts of the learners and the materials they have available (Savignon, 2007).

CLT can be divided into ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ versions (Ellis, 2003, p. 28). The former is based upon the premise that communicative competence can be recognised and taught in a classroom through functions such as expressing gratitude and asking for directions. On the other hand, the *strong* version of CLT follows the assumption that language can be acquired through communication. Therefore, educators strive to provide their students with situations whereby they can use language authentically as a means of communication, and in doing so, recognise grammar structures independently (Ellis, 2003). TBLT is seen to have developed from CLT because it uses language communicatively and in authentic situations and because activities that use real communication are seen to be fundamental to language learning (Scott, 2015). Tasks are both goal-oriented and meaning-focused and promote learning by doing rather than by focusing on language form and syntax (González Lloret 2017). For this reason, TBLT is considered a strong version of CLT (Ellis, 2003).

Traditional, linear grammar learning is rejected in TBLT, although learners can be provided with lots of practice in communication so that they encounter and learn different grammatical rules as they are ready for them (Shrestha, 2012; Ur, 2011). For this reason, tasks need to be authentic with rich, detailed input and always need to take the learners’ EFL level and interests into consideration (Stanojevic, 2015). TBLT has been enriched by the addition of technology-mediated tasks for a multitude of reasons. For example, it gives access to various means of communication and content that can be shared, presented and

reproduced (Alajarmeh and Rashed, 2019). By drawing upon the principles of TBLT, OCPs can offer the possibility to extend the classroom community to other schools and countries, replacing what Gayek explains as ‘nineteenth-century educational limits, that is, a four-walled classroom, two covers of a textbook and five working days a week’, with ‘meaningful communication tasks’ (Gajek, 2018, p. 6).

Other important aspects of CLT are the *natural* and the *formal approach*, also known as *acquisition* and *learning*. Krashen and Terrell (1988) distinguish between language *acquisition* and *learning*, the former being how language ability is developed ‘by using it in *natural*, communicative situations’ in a similar way to L1s (Krashen and Terrell, 1988, p. 18). On the other hand, formal language learning is the conscious study of grammar that Krashen (2003) says has a limited function in L2 communication and is only valuable in processes of correction. However, courses and activities that aim at grammar-based exams mean that language acquisition is often overlooked in classrooms. This can result in learners feeling a sense of failure, especially beginners who have difficulty conversing (Krashen and Terrell, 1988).

Krashen (2003) explains that teachers feel they need to teach grammar explicitly when their courses are directed at examinations that test grammar and that this is the principal reason for activities ‘going in the wrong direction’ (Krashen, 2003, p. 85). However, when grammar is better indirectly, for example, by ‘exposing learners to a large amount of comprehensible input’ (Ur, 2011, p. 510) through the reading of interesting texts or motivating activities, language is acquired with little conscious effort. Moreover, research has shown that students will still do well in quantitative tests, even those concentrating on grammar (Krashen, 2003). This is because they ‘learn concepts and facts much more easily’ (Krashen, 2003, p. 85). In order to be successful, L2 education should be a

‘launching pad’ (Krashen, p. 7) from which learners will gain the skillset to continue to improve independently.

In fact, there has been much discussion on whether to concentrate on grammar when teaching EFL or to concentrate on content and thus allowing grammar forms to be assimilated in a similar way to L1s (Wingate, 2016). Some scholars (Ellis, 2003; Krashen, 2003; Krashen and Terrell, 1988) promote L2 learning through content (also called the naturalistic approach to education), believing it is more effective than focusing on grammar structures that are absorbed when learners take part in communicative tasks that aim at fluency over accuracy. This concept is fitting with the assumptions of Gilleran (2019); Gajek (2018); Kearney and Gras-Velázquez (2018); Cassels et al. (2017); Chitanana (2012); and Guarda (2012) that MFLs are learnt by interaction. Likewise, Krashen (2003) points out that formal learning of grammar rules is required to monitor accuracy but not take precedence over communication. This can be successfully done when done in collaboration with other students in virtual learning environments such as OCPs with specific projects designed to teach grammar (González Lloret, 2017; Orsini-Jones, 2007). In addition, OCPs provide conditions for incorporating technology into both TBLT and CLT, allowing more freedom in communication by offering authentic interaction with international EFL speakers through tasks that encourage negotiation of meaning (González Lloret, 2017).

Krashen (2003) argues that if written or oral messages are understandable, interesting and received in a relaxed atmosphere, then learners will try to understand them, and grammar will be learnt anyway. However, foreign language learning is epistemologically different to L1s and most people learn L2s from a combination of both naturalistic and formal learning of grammar structures (Ortega, 2014). Another important consideration for Krashen’s

(2003) input theory is that it is directed at learners of English as an L2 rather than as a foreign language. The difference between L2s and foreign languages can be found when the learner is studying the target language. The former describes language learned within a community where the L2 is spoken as an L1, while the latter refers to the language studied in a society whose L1 is not the target (Smith, 2017). In this case, students are surrounded by people who speak their own L1 and have limited possibilities to use English (Farouk, 2016), such as in Italy.

Krashen and Terrell (1988) claim that a student's input needs to be received in a low-anxiety environment before SLA occurs, such as those created in OCPs (Crişan, 2013). This is because it is important to concentrate on what is being said rather than how it is told in order to learn a foreign language or an L2. Spoken fluency is understood to develop independently from conscious study and after a certain amount of input. A silent period follows comprehension, and then production begins. At first, production is flawed but will gradually become more sophisticated and complex as grammar structures and vocabulary are acquired (Krashen and Terrell, 1988). Krashen's theory has its roots in cognitivism and is a teacher-led process whereby the teacher decides upon and provides learners with learning material, as explained later in this chapter. This style of instruction contrasts with the nature of OCPs, which require a student-focused teaching approach, whereby the educator acts as a facilitator by guiding students into learning independently and is more suitable to a social constructivist paradigm. Therefore, with learner-centred constructivist approaches, such as those necessary for OCPs, students actively construct their own meaning from new knowledge gathered from individual experiences. On the other hand, in the case of teacher-led cognitivist approaches, such as Krashen and Terrell's (1988) comprehensible input theory, knowledge is passively fed to learners by another person or

teacher, thus eradicating the learner's autonomy and creativity (Amin, 2017) that are central to learning EFL with an OCP.

Although OCPs require social constructivist teaching methods, it is essential to review theory in SLA to support the understanding of teaching practices and learning strategies in the secondary EFL classroom. Krashen is well known as a pioneer in the field of SLA (Liu, 2015). His work has provided considerable contributions to the understanding of SLA and is presented in five hypotheses: 1) The acquisition-learning hypothesis; 2) The natural-order hypothesis; 3) The monitor hypothesis; 4) The input-hypothesis, and 5) The active filter hypothesis. However, while these contributions have 'played a significant role in the field of L2 acquisition and L2 teaching' (Lai and Wei, 2019, p. 1463), they have been the target of numerous criticisms. For example, some academics believe that they are over-simplified and that Krashen does not offer evidence to justify his claims (Lai and Wei, 2019; Liu, 2015; Zafar, 2010). In fact, Krashen 'mo[u]lds assumptions to suit his purpose' because they cannot be confirmed using empirical research (Liu, 2015, p. 141). Moreover, other academics such as Lai and Wei (2019) point how Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis would be difficult to use in the classroom because what is suitable for one student is unlikely to be the same for another.

Another important defect of Krashen's five hypotheses is that they ignore the negative or positive transfer of the speaker's L1 on the acquisition of L2, which varies depending upon individual sociocultural contexts (Zafar, 2010). Furthermore, learning and acquisition ought not to be separated, as Krashen's hypothesis assumes, but acquisition should be enriched by formal education (Lai and Wei, 2019). However, this study argues that the major flaw in Krashen's theory is that it gives significance to comprehensible input and very little to output. In fact, L2 output in the forms of speaking and writing is discarded as

something that will transpire ‘on its own with time’ (Krashen and Terrell, 1988, p. 22). Contrary to these views, more modern scholarship (Alajarmeh and Rashed, 2019; Gajek, 2018; González Lloret, 2017) considers language output skills fundamental for communication. This is underlined by both the 2001 and 2018 editions of the CEFR, which give equal weight to both input and output in terms of language development (Council of Europe, 2001; 2018).

However, despite these flaws, Krashen’s theory is still valid in many situations. For example, Shresta’s (1998) study supports Krashen’s natural acquisition hypothesis because lessons prioritising meaningful interaction in L2 were more effective than those in structural accuracy. Moreover, when the focus was upon accuracy, speech flow was disrupted and communication hindered with unwanted pauses, repetitions, and so on. In summary, as Lui (2015) noted, while Krashen’s five hypotheses have undeniable shortcomings, they still offer ‘some inspiring insights that both researchers and teachers can draw on’ (Lui, 2015, p. 145). Therefore, scholarship in SLA will be studied to enrich and contrast the social constructivism and SCT paradigm that feeds this research, stipulating a blend and balance of theory in the teaching and learning of EFL using OCPs.

2.4.5.1. Motivation in the Secondary-School English as a Foreign Language Classroom

A further aspect that successful TBLT and OCPs have in common is that motivation is considered a key factor to learning (Amin, 2017). Students need to be motivated if they are to learn successfully, and intrinsic motivation means that students do activities because they are interested in them. Situational interest produces curiosity that will encourage students to investigate a matter in more depth and sometimes even outside of the school

gates (Wigfield et al., 2012). Interest can take the form of enjoyment or be incited for various reasons, such as it for future goals. It will therefore be attractive to the student even if the activity is not. Likewise, motivation can be intrinsic when done to stay with friends or please parents (Wigfield et al., 2012). Other forms of intrinsic motivation are when the goal is to improve performance. Elliot (1999) makes the distinction between performance-mastery goals and performance-avoidance motivation. The former refers to how students aim to seem competent or even exceed their peers, while the latter is when students are not worried about doing better than others, but at the same time, do not want to seem incapable or incompetent. There are mixed views among scholars on goal-orientation methods of achieving motivation in education. Most agree that performance-avoid goals are damaging for school students. Still, some believe that the performance approach can be beneficial in schools, for example, in the critical achievement of grades (Wigfield et al., 2012). A pedagogical theory in SLA that uses performance-mastery goals as a means of motivation is behaviourism and is explained in the next section. On the other hand, a sociocultural approach to theory in motivation indicates that motivation is a feature that constantly changes because it depends upon the cultural and historical influences making up the class and how they influence each other (McInerney, Walker and Liem, 2014).

2.5. Second Language Acquisition and Pedagogical Theories

This section reviews the key aspects underlying the six most predominant learning theories that feed existing EFL and MFL learning and teaching paradigms: behaviourism; cognitivism; humanism; constructivism, social constructivism and sociocultural theory. It also explains their relevance to the use of OCPs in the EFL classroom. Each approach is presented critically and evaluated by looking at the most influential scholars in the field, such as Pavlov, Skinner, Chomsky, Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky. This serves to provide

the setting for the pedagogical aims of using OCPs in the EFL secondary school curriculum. Although this study supports a mixed approach in the EFL curriculum, the following sections debate the relevance of these theories regarding OCPs in the EFL classroom as an essential aspect.

2.5.1. Behaviourism

It might seem that the scientific theory called behaviourism has little to do with learning or teaching EFL using OCPs. Still, it was dominant in the emerging field of ELT and the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) theory in the first half of the twentieth century and gave rise to the Situational Approach and the Audiolingual and Audio-Visual Methods that are still in use today (Smith and Howatt, 2014). In addition, this study takes a cultural-historical viewpoint meaning that past theories will affect choices made in the classroom today, and thus behaviourism cannot be ignored.

Behaviourism derived from scholarship by behavioural psychologists, such as Pavlov, whose study on animals showed how the structural and functional integrity of the cerebral hemispheres in a dog's brain was responsible for its ability 'to be trained to perform various duties [such as] watching, hunting, etc' (Pavlov and Anrep, 2003, p. 1). He believed this to be the same for human beings (Pavlov and Anrep, 2003). Skinner (1957) took this idea further and applied it to language learning by proving that humans learn from experience and memory but overlooked that learning could be done on the learner's initiative (Buchanan, 2018). Central to this theory is the importance of encouragement or rewards when a learner achieves something. For this reason, language is broken down into small steps with lots of positive reinforcement. Szecsy (2008) explains that the viewpoint of behaviourist language teachers is as follows:

‘(a) language learning is mechanical habit formation and language is verbal habit; (b) mistakes should be avoided, as they result in bad habits; (c) language skills are learned better when practised orally first, then in writing; (d) analogy is an important foundation for language learning; and (e) the meanings of words can be learned best in a linguistic and cultural context, not in isolation’ (Szecsy, 2008, p. 49).

However, according to this theory, only linguistically correct responses can be rewarded in the language classroom, so the risk is that teachers using this approach might tend to adopt simple, impractical language that students can learn easily (Xiangui, 2005). However, the biggest concern with this method is the underlying concept that people only learn by imitation and that they are empty vessels waiting to be filled by an external force rather than that language is retained by the learner (Hung, 2010).

Despite the flaws, this approach is still used in EFL approaches that use drilling, repetition, language laboratories and the practice of oral skills in controlled environments and so on (Xiangui, 2005). The continuing success of behaviourist approaches can be found in pronunciation and collocations, where repetition and memorisation are valuable tools (Xiangui, 2005). Some scholars argue that digital technology has its roots in behaviourism because Skinner’s (1957) device for multiple-choice experiments is similar to modern-day online tests using digital devices (Weeger and Pacis, 2012). Finally, the relevance of behaviourism to this study is that OCPs provide settings that require a blend of approaches and theories (Gallardo et al., 2011) that are less effective when used alone (Weeger and Pacis, 2012). Other theories are expanded in the following sections.

2.5.2. Cognitivism

Although cognitivism does not dominate the EFL classroom today, its influence can still be recognised in curricula and coursebooks (Smith and Howatt, 2014). During the second half of the twentieth century, theory in ELT began to move towards the Communicative Approach or CLT (Section 2.3.2.4) using the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach. These are lesson sequences that are still mainstream in EFL coursebooks today (Smith and Howatt, 2014, pp. 88 and 89). Moreover, the Council of Europe's language assessment system stemmed from cognitive philosophy (Smith and Howatt, 2014). However, it was updated in 2018 to allow for changes in theory (see Section 2.5.1).

Chomsky was one of the most important scholars in the move from behavioural philosophy toward a cognitive one. Chomsky and Arnone (2011) criticised Skinner's philosophy arguing that foreign language users can produce and understand vast amounts of language, and inherent cognitive structures guide learning instead of behavioural imitation:

‘a child who learns a language has in some sense constructed the grammar for himself on the basis of his observation of sentences and non-sentences [...]. Furthermore, this task is accomplished in an astonishingly short time, to a large extent independently of intelligence, and in a complete way by all children. Any theory of learning must cope with these facts’ (Chomsky and Arnone, 2011, p. 29).

Therefore, cognitive learning is seen as being done fundamentally by the learner and that part of the human brain, a cognitive function, is dedicated to language acquisition. In this approach, and contrary to behaviourism, making mistakes is an integral part of the learning process (Chomsky and Arnone, 2011). While Chomsky believes that human beings have an innate language-learning ability, others believe that learners learn foreign languages as

they would any other subject, by using learning strategies such as looking for patterns, deducing rules and so on (Hinkel, 2012), in the ‘conscious study of language rules’ which cognitive educators deem ‘central to the learning of a foreign language’ (Demirezen, 2014, p. 311). Cognitive approaches are still prevalent in secondary school EFL curricula, especially in areas of reading and writing where the theoretical emphasis lies in a cognitive problem-solving approach focusing on exercises and collaborative tasks (Kern, 2006). In fact, according to Demirezen (2014), although it was the topic of discussion in the 1960s, the cognitive approach is still standard in SLA today.

In addition, although cognitivist scholars promote collaboration and communication, they still focus on the individual (Xiangui, 2005). This commands a teacher-led approach in the language classroom and is characteristic of cognitive teaching methods (Hinkel, 2012). Both behaviourist and cognitive approaches to teaching can be considered teacher-focused, meaning that knowledge is delivered from teacher to student in one direction (Hung, 2010). The application of cognitive theory to OCP platforms would suggest that they are places where knowledge is acquired rather than shared. However, the social perspective recognises the community engagement of interactive activities done on OCPs. In this case, the knowledge provider, either teacher or student, needs to focus upon the benefit of the entire OCP community of which they are part (French, 2017).

2.5.3. Constructivism and social constructivism

The theories behind constructivism and social constructivism are important aspects of this study. In contrast to cognitivism that assumes ‘homogeneity of language across speakers and contexts’ (Dooley, 2003, p. 3), constructivist approaches to the learning and teaching of EFL are based upon the concept that all human beings construct knowledge and meaning

in different ways. Piaget (1999 [1962]) and Bruner (1977) were particularly influential in constructivist ideas, which have also been of use to language teachers. Studies by the former tested children's intellectual phases of development. They found that children 'construct a kind of active representation of the thing that had just happened and [...] did not understand' (Piaget, 1999 [1962], p. 65). He concluded that people construct knowledge from action and either abandon or amend their conceptions when presented with new information (Woods, 2015).

Nevertheless, Vygotsky (2017 [1929]) criticised Piaget's theory because it ignored 'the influence of previous experience and previous knowledge the child may have' and that 'how it sees the world' (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929], p. 360) will influence its logic and understanding (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929]). Likewise, Bruner (1986) disagreed with Piaget's theory by saying that learners are not 'constantly reinventing the wheel' (Bruner, 1986, p. 3), but integrate their 'needs and strategies and interpretation with those of significant others' in their lives (Bruner, 1986, p. 3). Furthermore, he drew upon work by Vygotsky to explain the 'relationship between individual development and sociohistorical evolution' providing 'the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conception of ourselves' (Bruner, 1986, p. 3) because 'the instruments of language and culture also promote the growth of individual mental structures' (Bruner, 1986, p. 5). In other words, learners need to learn how to learn by being immersed in interesting activities (Bruner, 1986).

Social constructivist scholars are primarily influenced by Vygotsky and share the opinion that knowledge is constructed in social situations and through mediation tools such as language. Therefore, understanding depends on the cultural and social setting from which it was built and is considered an active process of constructing understanding rather than

memorising it (Hung, 2010). Teachers using this approach focus upon the negotiation of meaning through actions and situations to reach shared meaning (Hung, 2010). The Council of Europe (2018) actively encourage language teachers to use learner-centred approaches and, in particular, methods that are informed by social constructivist and sociocultural theories. This is clearly stated in the CEFR (The Council of Europe, 2018) and explained later in this thesis (see Section 2.6.1.). In fact, Weeger and Pacis (2012) point out that the theoretical balance in educational policy has veered towards constructivism because of the use of technology in online courses and the augmented use of educational technologies that support constructivist learning platforms (Weeger and Pacis, 2012) such as those home to OCPs.

2.5.4. Humanism

Humanist education considers the whole person whereby the development of individual skills is incorporated under a holistic understanding of developing an identity. This study takes the viewpoint that secondary-school teachers need to be aware of this theory. It is derived from Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs: 1) Physiological needs such as food, water and shelter; 2) Safety and security; 3) Love and a sense of belonging; 4) Self-esteem and the need for self-acceptance; 5) Self-actualising needs, for example for developing one's talents; 6) Justice, truth, beauty and understanding (Farmer, 1978). Maslow (1943) pointed out how a person cannot learn if their basic human needs, such as food and accommodation, are not fulfilled. Likewise, unless students feel safe and capable of accomplishment, it is unlikely they will succeed in learning. Belonging to a community is an important aspect that can be explained through humanism and is therefore relevant to learning EFL with OCPs.

Additionally, this study argues that in compulsory secondary education (especially in education systems where the passage from one year to the next is not automatic, such as in Italy). ‘School should be viewed as something other than a factory and should not be administered as if the learning the students received was a totally measurable product.’ (Farmer, 1978, p. 74). Quality education is a fundamental human right and is largely compulsory and free in lower and higher secondary schools in most states (Murphy, 2019). Therefore, young people are obliged to attend lessons despite difficulties they might be living, whether it is a lack of food and shelter or a lack of love due to problems at home or bullying at school. Creating or joining OCPs that dismantle stereotyping and encourage empathy might make a slight difference (Camilleri, 2016). For example, a promotional case study into OCPs done on eTwinning showed how their teachers guided students into embracing diversity and thus became generous, understanding and inclusive individuals (Gillera et al., 2017).

2.5.5. Sociocultural Theory and Online Community Projects

SCT research recognises the fact that people with varied cultures and learning motives have diverse attitudes towards tasks and learning (Ellis, 2003). This is because knowledge emerges from social interaction that depends upon the location and historical contexts. Therefore, cognitive processes, such as learning, cannot be separated from the person's sociocultural settings, which the individual influences and is influenced (Johnson and Golombek, 2018; Lantolf and Thorne, 2007; Hampel, 2006).

Regarding EFL and SLA, SCT examines how learners assimilate L2 through collaborative activity; whether it be online, offline or a combination of both (Lloyd, 2016; Dooly, 2011; Razfar et al., 2011; Johnson, 2006; Kern, 2006; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). The following

sections provide an in-depth analysis of SCT to lay the background for this study's principal theoretical settings and illustrate its relevance to OCPs and the learning and teaching of EFL. Additionally, interpretations of the ZPD are briefly outlined, and OCPs are examined as a means of mediation for the creation of CoPs. Although SCT has largely been developed from Vygotsky's social emphases of constructivism (Hung, 2010), this study also examines literature by other scholars, such as Lantolf, Swain, Johnson, Lave, Wenger, Rogoff and Wertsch.

2.5.5.1. The Zone of Proximal Development

Although the concept of the ZPD has not been used to analyse the data in this study, it has been acknowledged here in this literature review because it is a significant theme of SCT. In Vygotsky's (2011[1935]) words, the ZPD is 'the distance between the level of [the child's] actual development, determined with the help of independently solved tasks, and the level of possible development, defined with the help of tasks solved by the child under the guidance of adults or in cooperation with more intelligent peers.' (Vygotsky, 2011 [1935], p. 204). Therefore, '[w]hat the child is capable of doing today with the help of others, tomorrow he will be doing himself' (Vygotsky, 2011 [1935], p. 205). The ZPD provides teachers with:

'a tool through [with] which the internal course of development can be understood. By using this method, we can take into account not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed, but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop' (Vygotsky, 1997 [1978], p. 33).

However, the ZPD is individual to each human being and 'defined in terms of children's mental age, curricular material, and time' (Vygotsky, 2011 [1935], p. 208). Therefore,

teachers need to find the correct level for each individual. But this is not easy in a class of thirty students. Moreover, teachers should not focus on what a student knows, as in the case of testing, but what they are capable of knowing, because any level of ‘study that is either too easy or too difficult is ineffective’ (Vygotsky, 2011 [1935], p. 208). Therefore, the ZPD looks at what can be achieved in the future rather than just what has been learnt in the past (Lantolf and Thorne, 2007).

Although Vygotsky’s account of the ZPDs is clear, identifying and applying it (for example, to the subject of EFL in secondary education) is open to interpretation. Firstly, Vygotsky (2017 [1929]) explains that language is key to understanding the relationship between learning processes and development because it is the primary tool that human beings use to understand the world. He explains that children acquire language through communication with people in their community, and later becomes ‘inner speech’ and ‘the basis for [their] ability to think’ (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929], p. 368). However, ‘the developmental process lags behind the learning process; this sequence then results in [ZPDs]’ (Vygotsky, (1997 [1978], p. 35). The following paragraphs discuss Lave and Wenger’s (1991) definition of the ZPD.

Firstly, it is described as ‘the distance between problem-solving abilities exhibited by a learner working alone and that learner’s problem-solving abilities when assisted by or collaborating with more-experienced people’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 48). This interpretation is in line with Bruner’s concept of scaffolding (Allen, 2005). As previously mentioned, Bruner (1986) promotes activities that are both pleasing and culturally meaningful to the learner and aims to provide students with skills that will make them autonomous in their learning. To do this, he suggests ‘scaffolding the task in a way that assures that only those parts of the task within the child’s reach are left unresolved’

(Bruner, 1977, p. xiv). In the case of language learning, tasks were intended as dialogues between the teacher and student. However, Lantolf and Thorne (2007) contend that the ZPD is not the same as scaffolding because the role of the teacher, or the more knowledgeable-peer in scaffolding, is to help the child to complete a task rather than to develop his/her skills as meant by working within the ZPD (Lantolf and Thorne, 2007).

A second interpretation of the ZPD is based on Davydov and Markova's (1982) study that suggests it is the difference between formal instruction through educational activities provided by schools and informal knowledge assimilated in other forms of exercise such as play, work, reading for pleasure and so on. Their analysis suggests that the ZPD emerges when a learner-centred cultural approach is used, whereby students are encouraged to distinguish their own values and experiences in order to carry out learning activities with the teacher's assistance (Davydov and Markova, 1982). This interpretation is based upon the distinction Vygotsky makes between scientific and routine activities (Allen, 2005).

'[The]learning process that takes place before school age differs fundamentally from the process of school education, whose job it is to impart the basics of scientific knowledge. But even when the child asks its first questions and learns the names of surrounding objects, it goes through a definite cycle of education. Thus, learning and development are not encountered for the first time at school, but are in fact connected with one another from the first day of a child's life.' (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929], p. 365)

However, the two above-described interpretations portray social activity that takes place among a small number of people (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Finally, the third interpretation of the ZPD places learning in the broader setting of the social world. For example, Engeström's (1987) Cultural Historical Activity Theory

(CHAT)¹ identifies the ZPD as an area between the everyday actions of individuals and a new societal activity that can be designed as a solution to conflicts originating in the past and from cultural traits. However, this understanding is more directed at social transformation than pedagogical learning (Allen, 2005).

2.5.5.2. Mediation

A further concept in SCT is mediation, which refers to the process of learning by using tools. Wertsch (2007) explains that although the concept of mediation is a central theme running through Vygotsky's work, Vygotsky did not give it a definition or name it. It can be identified in various ways, which Wertsch (2007) categorises into two kinds: explicit and implicit mediation. The former refers to a motivating agent intentionally given to an individual to encourage them to communicate and learn. On the other hand, implicit mediation is less obvious and is present as 'an already ongoing communicative stream brought into contact with other forms of action. One of the properties that characterise implicit mediation is that it involves signs, especially natural language, whose primary function is communication.' (Wertsch, 2007, pp. 180-181). Therefore, mediation tools can be culturally constructed artefacts, concepts, activities, and language because human cognition is believed to be the result of an inseparable blend of social interaction and cultural-historical processes. In the case of this study, the OCP can be considered as an explicit tool for mediation (Ortega, 2014; Young-Scholten et al., 2013).

¹ CHAT is another term for SCT, although the latter is widely used in research regarding L2 (Lantolf and Thorn, 2007).

Language is one of the most important cultural artefacts used for mediation. It is the primary way human beings mediate with the world, with themselves and other human beings (Lantolf and Thorne, 2007). It offers the medium for people to communicate and apprehend concepts outside of the restrictions of the time and context in which they live, and known as internalisation (Lantolf and Thorne, 2007). Vygotsky (1987) explained that this happens on two levels; firstly, between people on the interpersonal plane and, secondly, individually on the intrapersonal plane. Imitation is central to Vygotsky's theory of internalisation and should be 'based on the ability to improve thinking not just through training, as in apes, but also as an individual action' (Vygotsky, 2011[1935], p. 209). It is important to point out how this concept contrasts with behaviourist approaches such as the Audiolingual Method (see Section 2.4.1.), which has been likened to 'mindless mimicking' by SCT scholars such as Lantolf and Thorne (2007, p. 207). However, as with the other areas of SCT, Vygotsky's theory of internalisation has been interpreted in various ways. The following section will discuss how it is understood within the theory of CoP.

2.5.5.3. Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on Situated Learning, LPP and CoPs, is largely influenced by SCT because it 'place[s] more emphasis on connecting issues of sociocultural transformations with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing social practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 49). However, instead of seeing learning as the internalisation of knowledge that is put into practice after having been internalised (as with SCT), it is seen as the attainment of skills and understanding by increasingly participating in a CoP. Thus, 'learning' is conceived as increasing 'participation' that leads to 'an evolving form of membership' in a social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Moreover, it transfers learning from a purely

cognitive experience to a ‘whole person acting in the world’ or community (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 49).

LPP is the term used to describe this transformation. It is the ‘process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice’ involving ‘activities, identities, artefacts [...], knowledge and practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Moreover, LPP promotes learning as an integral part of students’ lives that is not confined to the classroom. For this reason, participation and social guidance are fundamental to the cognitive process. Successful participation in a CoP will help students to feel independent and part of the learning practice, as well as helping them to construct a positive identity during the changing participation in the division of labour. This will eventually produce an autonomous community. It is important to point out that the success of the OCP does not depend upon the teacher but on how the teacher takes part in and organises the community, in the same way as a CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Similarly, Rogoff (2003) argues that LPP in CoPs includes Guided Participation. This term defines the ‘various ways children learn as they participate in and are guided by the values and practices of their cultural communities’ (Rogoff, 2003, p. 284). Like LPP, it is not a learning method, but a means to involve any learning process, such as a simple explanation. It can even describe undesirable ones, for example, teasing, shaming, the use of violence and even the evasion of some kinds of learning (for example, sexuality and family income), all of which focus on particular social values and practices of the shared community (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, Rogoff (2003) emphasises the importance of the social community surrounding individual secondary school locations and the nature of LPP and guided participation.

Guided Participation supports the fundamental SCT supposition that learners working together on a collaborative endeavour attempt ‘to bridge their different perspectives using culturally available tools such as words and gestures and referencing each other’s actions and reactions’ (Rogoff, 2003, p. 285). Additionally, the same social environment will be perceived differently by each individual, and each activity will be lived uniquely (van der Veer, 2007). For this reason, it cannot be expected that all participants in a CoP will benefit from, or be impaired by, social interaction (Daniels, 2007). Therefore, as Lave and Wenger (1991) point out, the management and guidance of a community, in this case by teachers, is fundamental in influencing how its members participate in a project. Participation, collaboration and experience will impact developing knowledge and learning in the formation of CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Theory in CoP is also relevant to the area of teacher development and is fundamental to this study. A community is created through an OCP that considers solutions to problems found in the daily lives of each individual through helping and supporting each other (Allen 2005). This is particularly useful for inexperienced teachers who can learn from those with more experience and knowledge (Gajek, 2018; Zuengler and Miller, 2006). In addition, OCPs can help teachers ‘engage in ongoing activity to update and expand their professional knowledge bases or review their practices to ensure they are best meeting the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student base’ (Townsend and Bates, 2006, p. 467). Johnson (2006) points out that teachers need to decide how to teach their subjects in situations and contexts that are socially, culturally and historically complex. For this reason, they need to be both users and creators of knowledge, and collaborating with peers through OCPs can help them acquire the skills to do that. This is because, ‘rather than separating formal knowledge and theory for teaching from the practical knowledge gained

from applying ideas in action, learning communities can help teachers take a more systemic view through critical inquiry with peers' (Holmes, 2013, p. 98).

As far as OCPs are concerned, collaboration among people from different sociocultural backgrounds and with different understandings are given the possibility to construct shared meanings together (Allen, 2005). However, as Holmes (2013) explains, it is important that participants have a clear common focus on purpose and teamwork because mental process such as learning cannot be separated from the individual's sociocultural settings (Vygotsky, 2017; Hung, 2010; van der Veer, 2007; Hampel, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Therefore, and in relation to OCPs, tasks need to place a suitable challenge whereby learners use their language skills to communicate and collaborate, while at the same time respecting their own capabilities (Ellis, 2003, p. 179). In this way, it is possible for a virtual CoP to develop as language is negotiated and constructed among project partners that resembles real life on a small multi-lingual and multicultural scale (Gajek, 2018). These factors suggest the potential value of OCPs as a tool for sociocultural learning and teaching.

2.5.6. Teacher-led and learner-centred approaches

The last part of this section explores the primary difference between the teaching approaches and theories presented in this chapter. Although there are numerous schools of thought on teaching methods, this study will generalise them down into two binaries: learner-centred and teacher-led. As explained previously, behavioural and cognitive approaches to teaching can be categorised as the latter and thus generate a one-way passing of knowledge from teacher to student (Hung, 2010). On the other hand, social constructivist and SCT approaches are considered learner-centred and transform the roles

of teachers into those of facilitators rather than instructors, thus challenging the traditional classroom setting. Learner-centred approaches to MFL teaching share the sociocultural concept that learners' aptitudes differ depending upon their cultural and historical background, and this influences their attitude towards learning. This approach functions by drawing upon authentic materials that deal with interesting and relevant topics to learners to motivate them to participate actively, thus encouraging creativity and independence (Wenden, 2002). For this reason, learner-centred teaching requires a different set of skills, such as the ability to motivate students to work together and to use their initiative and creativity (Bailey and Card, 2009).

On the other hand, teacher-led approaches such as the traditional 'presentation-practice production process' (Ur, 2011 p. 514) are often based upon behaviourism or a cognitive perspective regarding the mastering of grammatical rules to be the first step in learning a foreign language (Hinkel, 2012). Morphosyntax is usually presented in a linear order of tenses such as those in course textbooks that dictate the order in which these structures should be taught (Ur, 2011). Although this approach has been widely criticised as ineffective and incompatible with currently accepted language acquisition theory, the command that it has in prevailing textbooks makes it the model for many language curricula today (Ur, 2011). Wenden (2002) suggests that two of the difficulties in designing learner-centred curricula in secondary schools are that teachers do not always have the autonomy to design syllabuses. Moreover, instruction is aimed towards groups of students whose needs are expected to be the same, while learner-centred approaches focus on individual learner requirements. OCPs support learner-centred constructivist learning approaches (Weeger and Pacis, 2012), so these could be some of the reasons why so few EFL teachers choose to integrate OCPs into their curricula.

Finally, a study by Morgana and Shrestha (2018) shows that it is only in the past twenty years that teachers in Italy have left the behavioural grammar-translation method to embrace a more communicative one such as CLT and TBLT. On the other hand, Kampylis, Bocconi and Punie (2012) explain that integrating OCPs into school curricula can encourage teachers to use learner-led approaches. This is because the flexible learning contexts place the student at the heart of learning, allowing them to develop at their own speed and meet their sociocultural requirements. In addition, the digital technology used with OCPs can enable practices to be shared among the online community members that extend beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom (Gayek, 2018), offering areas where teachers can share innovative experiences and can be valuable for professional development (Kampylis et al., 2012). Lastly, the traditional role of an EFL schoolteacher is reintroduced as an organiser and facilitator rather than a provider of knowledge (Kampylis et al., 2012).

2.6. Teachers' continuous professional development

The last section in this literature review is dedicated to teacher development in secondary education and addresses the possibility of integrating OCPs into EFL curricula. It also discusses scholarship showing the benefits or disadvantages concerning professional development in the teaching of EFL. These factors are relevant to this study because OCPs are environments where teachers can meet, pool their expertise, materials, ideas and resources in online CoPs and provide areas where teachers can create online classrooms and projects.

Online platforms such as OCPs can seem unstructured and without a clear purpose because of their informal and evolving nature. Still, Germain-Rutherford (2015) claims that the

supportive atmosphere can help teachers improve their language, and global intercultural awareness. In addition, promotional research for OCP platforms, such as eTwinning, advertise how twenty-first-century teaching skills are evolving through collaborating on OCPs and ideas are being remodelled and distributed (Kearney and Gras-Velázquez, 2018; Camilleri, 2016; Education for Change, 2012; Gajek and Poszytek, 2009). This section examines how far this statement extends to the professional development of future EFL teachers.

Dooly and Sandler (2013) point out the large amount of responsibility given to teachers who have the task of simplifying learning tasks while at the same time making them significant to their learners. Although technology offers teachers new possibilities, it also places more demands on them (Palloff and Pratt, 1999). Furthermore, Dooly and Sandler (2013) found that after training, few teachers use technology or communication-focused activities in their lessons at all. Additionally, there is a wide gap between theory and practice. While teachers have studied education theory during their training programmes, they have not been taught how to use it in the classroom or even why they should be using it (Sandler, 2013). This could be due to an epistemological gap in teacher training because many foreign language teachers have been socialised into believing that learning is internal to the learner. For this reason, it might seem that the best way to teach EFL is by aiming towards passing standardised tests (Johnson, 2006). This study agrees that this is a crucial issue in EFL teaching in secondary schools and often results in impractical curricula. Johnson (2006) suggests that instead of teaching theory to educators in training programmes, a possible solution would be to give teachers time to understand and experiment with the potential of EFL teaching theories within the settings of their

professional lives. In this way, teachers actively use and produce theory fitting for their own teaching contexts (Johnson, 2006).

Another point to consider in teacher formation is that past experiences often influence teachers in the classroom as learners. Research has shown that some teachers assume that their own students will learn in the same way as they did when they were students and that changes to these presumptions become more complex as time progresses (Oleson and Hora, 2013). Teachers' own experiences as learners will continue to influence their teaching approaches throughout their whole careers. However, at the same time, they will also continue to build upon their experience in 'a socialisation process into a unique cultural group, a process that is not dissimilar to an individual's socialisation into any social group' (Oleson and Hora, 2013, p. 42). For this reason, OCPs are potentially fertile places for teachers to experience theory and thus give 'extra value to their everyday teaching' by helping them to understand what works for them (Gajek, 2018; Gulbay, 2018). However, many teachers are not aware of the benefits of online collaboration through OCPs or even that platforms such as eTwinning or iEARN exist. Even those who do know about them often find difficulties in implementing OCPs due to the lack of support for digital technology within educational institutions.

Other factors that discourage teachers from integrating OCPs into their curricula include poor Internet connections as well as the lack of time and difficulties relating topics to curricula (Camilleri, 2016; Crişan, 2013). The problem is that research has shown that experience, skill, and charisma are not enough to transform teachers into experts. This will not happen unless teachers have explored and experimented with new ideas during long careers (Tsui, 2011), and studies show that OCPs, such as ones done using the eTwinning platform, can motivate both teachers and students into experimenting with new, more

practical classroom approaches, thus transforming self-confidence and identity, as well as improving communication in EFL (Crişan, 2013; Kitade, 2014). This is important because, as some scholars maintain, teachers are the most important part of learners' educational progress (Dooly and Eastment, 2009; Townsend and Bates, 2006; Council of Europe, 2001). Therefore, teachers need to choose activities that are meaningful to students in their everyday lives because achievement cannot be separated from the individual's upbringing and social context (Scimeca et al., 2018; Wingate, 2016; Scott, 2015; Dooly and Sandler, 2013; Guarda, 2012; Van Lier, 2011; Townsend and Bates, 2006; Ellis, 2003).

However, inexperienced teachers often rely on textbooks to determine the content and structure of their lessons (Dooly and Sandler, 2013). Frequently, textbook topics are not only dull but can even be threatening to EFL adolescents. This is because they are chosen using L1 speakers as models and often mean little to the lives of EFL learners who live elsewhere and who have different cultures and histories. For example, vocabulary exercises that describe: the idealised English-speaking family with a lovely home, two parents and each child with their own bedroom, the conversations teenagers have with their friends; the holidays they have in order to simulate vocabulary for travel and tourism; free-time activities that are individual to L1 speaker's countries and climates; food vocabulary; ordering in restaurants and so on (Wingate, 2016; Ortega, 2014). For this reason, it is important that teachers reflect upon the material they use in their EFL classroom because 'the old image of the teacher with a piece of chalk and a few textbooks is now well in the past' (Townsend and Bates, 2006, p. 20).

2.6.1. The Common European Framework for Languages and the Modern Foreign Language curriculum

The final part of this chapter reviews the developments in the MFL curriculum in Europe concerning the CEFR. This is necessary to understand the relevance of integrating explicit mediation tools, such as OCPs, into the EFL curriculum. The CEFR was first published in 2001, updated in 2018, and ‘provides a common basis for elaborating language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe’ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1).

One of the main reasons for creating the CEFR was to encourage learning and teaching approaches that would improve communication and lead to more unrestricted movement and collaboration among diverse cultures (Council of Europe, 2001). Teachers were presented as role models for their students to follow, and it emphasised the importance of a relaxed and interactive environment, with tasks designed to encourage students to participate actively to avoid intercultural misunderstanding and conflict (Council of Europe, 2001). Although this is evocative of Krashen and Terrell’s (1988) natural approach to language acquisition and learning discussed previously, it also indicates a move towards SCT that describes how knowledge develops from social interaction among people with different cultures and historical contexts, also explained earlier in this chapter. The 2001 edition described four language skills were divided into four: reading, writing, listening and speaking with detailed rubrics for assessing six levels (from the lowest: A1 or elementary, to the highest: C2 or proficiency) (Council of Europe, 2001).

However, in the 2018 edition, new descriptors promoting an ‘action-oriented approach’ were established in order to distance syllabuses from a ‘linear progression through

language structures, or a predetermined set of notions and functions, towards syllabuses based on needs and analysis, orientated towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions' (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 26). Therefore, this later publication would suggest a conscious effort by the European authorities to encourage curricula that foster learner-centred approaches to teaching by encouraging alternative assessment processes to standardised grammar tests. Teachers and education systems are advised to adopt assessment tests that promote practical communicative activities 'presented under four modes of communication: reception, production, interaction and mediation' instead of the four language skills listed in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 30). Moreover, it advises teachers to use collaborative tasks in the classroom. It reports that 'the CEFR scheme is highly compatible with several recent approaches to L2 learning, including the task-based approach, the ecological approach and in general all approaches informed by sociocultural and socio-constructivist theories.' (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 29 and 30).

Therefore, on the basis of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018), it would seem that OCPs might be a valuable addition to a language curriculum because of their social constructivist nature. However, Díez-Bedmar and Byram (2019) show that many teachers (internationally) are not familiar with the CEFR. Furthermore, the levels, competencies and descriptors of the 2001 version remain the most commonly known feature, but other features such as 'culture', interculturality', 'curriculum', 'syllabus' or 'tasks' were hardly known at all and 'there are also some worrying misconceptions of the CEFR' itself (Díez-Bedmar and Byram, 2019, p. 12). In addition, research into policy and practice in foreign language education has acknowledged a focus on outcomes and targets that is incompatible with CEFR ideology (Mitchell, 2010). In fact, although teachers are encouraged to provide

learners with realistic contexts from which to learn, they are given a workplace where textbooks dictate their craft, and they often accept this situation because it is familiar to their own education and training programme (Owens, 2013).

In addition, teachers are under pressure to prepare students for exams with little in common with social constructivist teaching methods (Gajek, 2018; Helm and Dooly, 2017; Gouseti, 2013). This is confusing because, although education systems promote sharing and collaboration, assessment tests are directed at individual performance, where shared homework and test items are considered unethical and therefore unacceptable (Asterhan and Bouton, 2017). In fact, the field of quantitative aptitude language testing is measured against questions of ‘ethics, fairness and validation’ (Kunnan, 2003, p. 249). However, Bruce and Hamp-Lyons (2015) note that the problem is not the tests, but in the fact that curricula are being designed around assessment tools such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) without a proper understanding of the CEFR.

2.7. Conclusion

Although the researcher had difficulty finding literature that combined OCPs, EFL and Secondary school education, literature regarding the following areas was studied:

- a. Globalisation and Education;
- b. Promotional literature for OCP platforms;
- c. Literature on variations of VE and CALL;
- d. Pedagogical theory in SLA;
- e. Teachers' continuous professional development;
- f. The CEFR.

This combination has provided valuable insights towards answering the research questions.

Main research question: how can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in a secondary school setting?

1. How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?
2. How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?
3. Have teachers and students encountered any difficulties and drawbacks while using OCPs? If so, what were they?
4. How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum?

In response to these questions, a summary of the key points has been drawn up and listed below:

- There is an indication of a lack of research into EFL in secondary education despite its growing importance (see Sections 2.2. and 2.2.1.);

- Promotional reports into eTwinning say that working on OCPs can help global skills and improve MFLs in general (see Section 2.2.1.);
- Enjoyable activities are not always advantageous because they often focus on entertainment rather than EFL theory and thus lower the learning potential (see Section 2.2.1.);
- OCPs operate according to the same principles as CBLT and NBLT; therefore, they work on social constructivist theory (see Section 2.4.);
- Categories regarding CALL contribute to online communication and technology theory, such as the advantages of synchronous text messages over spoken EFL online synchronous communication. However, it is be noted that the literature in question was based upon pre-COVID studies. Since then, online synchronous communication has become more common in secondary school education due to necessity (Bojović, Ž. et al., 2020) (see Sections 2.4.2. and 2.4.3.);
- Theory in SLA is relevant to understanding the dynamics behind using OCPs as a tool for teaching and learning EFL, despite the numerous flaws described in the literature (see Section 2.4.5);
- Teaching approaches founded upon behaviourist and cognitivist theory operate teacher-led methods, while those recognising social constructivist teaching theories require learner-centred ones (see Sections 2.5. and 2.5.6.);
- The sociocultural aspect of OCPs could make them advantageous for teachers' continuous professional development (see Section 2.6.);
- Directives and publications from international organisations such as the UNESCO (Nikolitsa-Winter et al. (2019), the United Nations (2015) and the Council of

Europe (2018), indicate an aim to move education systems towards a learner-centred, social constructivist curriculum (see Sections 2.2. and 2.5.1).

These points indicate that while promotional reports suggest that OCPs can strengthen language skills, little empirical research substantiates this fact. Literature in SLA and pedagogical theory reveal that OCP activities command social-constructivist methods that operate learner-centred approaches. On the other hand, most of the studies reviewed in this chapter regarding EFL and SLA portray a teacher-led cognitive paradigm.

A distinctive feature of this study is that it is a practitioner enquiry whereby the researcher teaches EFL and uses OCPs in a secondary school setting. For this reason, it addresses the need for this research and aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This will involve investigating the perceptions and beliefs of EFL teachers and students living in Italy and other countries regarding integrating OCPs into the EFL curriculum. This will shed light on the areas of scholarship where little is known and contribute to information regarding OCPs. The following chapter presents how this enquiry was conducted to address the research questions in an original and effective manner.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The methodology chapter aims to explain the relationship between the ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches within the study and how each approach fits within a qualitative research paradigm. The chapter is divided into nine sections. After the introduction, the second section outlines the philosophical viewpoints that justify using a qualitative paradigm. The third section rationalises Action Research (AR) as a valid research methodology while debating insider and outsider research disparity. It also gives a detailed description of each step taken in the three AR cycles. Additionally, a brief description is given of the initial study and its relation to the main one and reminds the reader of the research questions.

The fourth section of this chapter introduces the methods and Multiple Case Study (MCS) as the best design framework for collecting data. The fifth section of this methodology chapter introduces the specifics of the Italian school system and the school where the researcher works. It also introduces the participants, the context of where the enquiry is set and the Online Community Projects (OCPs). The sixth section presents the tools used in the data gathering process, the methods of sampling used and the process of transcribing face-to-face interviews. The seventh section introduces thematic analysis and explains how it relates to practitioner research and AR enquiry. The eighth section provides a detailed description of the measures taken to stay within the ethical boundaries, especially when working with minors. Lastly, the reliability and validity of the study are defended while defining the processes taken to maintain reflexivity. Section nine concludes the chapter and sets the ground for chapter four.

3.2. Paradigm

Central to any methodological approach is the need to clarify the researcher's epistemological position by explaining what is understood by the nature of knowledge. This study is framed within a sociocultural, social constructivist paradigm because at the heart of this research lies a curiosity about the multiple and social worlds that young people share. The ontological and epistemological convictions underlying this research were arrived at through a developmental journey.

Extensive reading into social-constructivist paradigms has led to an awareness of sociocultural approaches to language learning, such as Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2014) that was used for the initial study of this enquiry (see Section 3.3.4.). However, while corresponding to the ontological ideologies of this study, CHAT did not parallel the epistemological requirements of the main research question, which gives weight to the participants' subjective viewpoints rather than to the activity (Lilley and Hardman, 2017). Nevertheless, the extensive reading provided an in-depth understanding of sociocultural theory (SCT), which is central to this study. Likewise, the idea of discovering new concepts by using grounded theory was captivating. However, this design frame did not fit within the enquiry's ontological objective because of the wide number of cases needed on which to ground theory (Charmaz and Bryant, 2007). Therefore, an MCS was chosen to find various perspectives on activities and issues. This was useful because differences in social, cultural and historical backgrounds are valuable in shedding light on some of the many perspectives, especially the challenging ones (Stake, 2006). Nevertheless, the researcher was aware that care would be needed to counteract potential conscious and unconscious personal biases (Alexakos, 2015).

Social collaboration is central to constructivist theory (see Section 2.5.2.). Constructivist scholars see learning as a dynamic development of knowledge through experience, participation, collaboration and communication with peers, experts and surroundings (Hwang et al., 2020). In addition, the use of social-collaboration networks, such as OCPs, as mediating tools are relevant to twenty-first-century learners (Psyché, Daniel and Bourdeau, 2019). Students attending secondary schools at the time of this study were born at the beginning of the twenty-first century, thus making them part of the Z generation. This generation has also been called the Google generation or the C generation where the 'C' stands for the twenty-first century, global or soft skills (see Section 2.2.), such as 'communication, collaboration, connection and creativity' (Psyché et al., p. 306). This generation of learners is said to have a short attention span and obtain most of their entertainment from mobile devices (Stillman and Stillman, 2017). For this reason, secondary-school students are more likely to respond well to active, situated learning (see Section 2.5.5.3.), which supports the acquisition of skills through increased participation and collaboration in social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This can be achieved with social networking platforms such as Facebook or Twitter (Montes-Orozco, 2019) or educational ones such eTwinning.

Social media facilitates collaboration, especially among people who live far away (Galvin and Greenhow, 2019). The problem is that many countries have laws against minors using social media applications. So educational platforms such as eTwinning offer good alternatives to secondary school teachers because they present similar advantages but are designed with minors in mind because the space is private to teachers or administrators who need to protect their students' privacy. Networking on safe sites encourages and improves communication skills and improves creativity and learning (Branley-Bell, 2019).

However, learners need a reason to communicate for collaboration to take place. This could be the task or activity initially negotiated by the teacher administrators, then further discussed and constructed by the learners. This social collaboration will produce and create a Community of Practice (CoP) (see Section 2.5.5.3.) (Oliveira, Tinoca and Periera, 2011).

A key feature of CoPs and constructive approaches to learning is that they are learner-centred (Hwang et al., 2020) (see Section 2.5.6.). Today, many education systems promote learner-centred practices and competence-based approaches to language learning (Mont and Masats, 2018). To place the learner at the centre of learning, the teacher needs to step back and assume the role of a guide rather than an instructor (Hung, 2010). This is achieved by organising an environment that encourages collaboration among peers and presents a task, problem, or activity that gives the learner the freedom to produce meaningful learning and limit the teachers' intervention in the 'knowledge discovery process' (Rob and Rob, 2018, p. 273).

This qualitative study reflects the ontological belief that reality is constructed differently by every individual and that interpretations of an experience depend upon cultural and historical factors (Rogoff et al., 2017; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Epistemologically, it gives weight not only to the participants' subjective viewpoints but also to the researcher's understandings as a teacher, an OCP initiator and a participant (Bailey, 2008). Therefore, the researcher's familiarity with OCPs might have drawbacks as well as advantages, so attentiveness towards the 'value-laden nature of the information gathered in the field' is central to the axiological characteristics of qualitative research and the integrity with which it is depicted (Cresswell, 2003, p. 21). Despite aspiring to be as impartial as possible, any observations will inevitably be influenced by the researcher's understanding since qualitative results can only be generalisable in a logical but not statistical way (Stake,

2000). For this reason, it is important to be familiar with personal values and goals (Reflexivity Section: 3.5.4.) and reflect upon them to make them clear to participants and readers (Alexakos, 2015). Table one summarises the paradigm of this study. It is divided into three main sections: 1) The purpose of research questions; 2) The methodology and the philosophical viewpoints; 3) The methods of data collection and analysis that make up the design frame of this study. These aspects are described in detail throughout the rest of this chapter.

Table 1: Paradigm

Paradigm			
Purpose	Methodology	Methods	
Research questions	Ontology <i>'The nature of reality'</i> (Alexakos, 2015, p. 33)	Data collection <i>'Who and how to involve'</i> (Alexakos, 2015, p. 33)	Data analysis
<p>Main research question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in a secondary school setting? <p>Sub-research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs? How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs? Have teachers and students encountered any difficulties and drawbacks while using OCPs? If so, what were they? How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum 	Historical relativism Reality differs from person to person and is socially constructed under internal influence Language shapes reality (Scotland, 2012)	<p>MCS named OCPCluster to describe the multiplicity of each of the five cases making up the MCS. Data is gathered using online open-question questionnaires, emails and face-to-face interviews.</p> <p>Cases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Case-one students (C1S): Students from a Liceo Linguistico (8 interviews and 21 emails); Case-two students (C2S): Students from the Liceo Economico Sociale (4 face to face interviews); Case-three students (C3S): Students who are doing projects with the researcher but live abroad (57 online open questioned questionnaires); Case-four teachers (C4T): Teachers working in the same school as the researcher (3 face-to-face interviews); Case-five teachers (C5T): Teachers (researcher of this thesis included) who use OCPs but work in other cities or countries (1 face to face interview; 5 individualised open-question questionnaires and 5 online open-questioned questionnaires) 	<p>Thematic analysis and description using qualitative data analysis software (Quirkos) as an aid.</p>
	Epistemology <i>'What constitutes knowledge and knowledge systems'</i> (Alexakos, 2015, p. 33)		
	Subjectivism - Sociocultural ideology Knowledge is socially constructed (Scotland, 2012)		
	Axiology <i>'What and how we value something'</i> (Alexakos, 2015, p. 33)		
	Sociocultural and Social constructivist viewpoints; Researchers aim to raise awareness and develop community-		
	Methodology		
	Qualitative Action Research		

3.3. Methodology: Action Research

This study will now turn to AR methodology. This approach is particularly suitable for this enquiry for three reasons. Firstly, because the researcher is a secondary school teacher studying her practice at her workplace. Secondly, because the AR is done in collaboration with a small group of colleagues who all aim at improvement, and thirdly because the flexibility of AR is particularly compatible with the researcher's philosophical standpoint.

Generally speaking, there are two types of AR: the practical one where teachers work alone or in a small team (otherwise considered collaborative AR) to improve practice by studying an issue, and Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is a larger study aiming at improvement, emancipation and change within organisations or communities (Cresswell, 2003). This enquiry is the former kind of AR, where the researcher works with a small group, Case-five teachers (C5T) of like-minded teachers as 'participants [...] and talk about their work and their values, and come to a mutual consensus or shared understanding' (Mackay, 2016, p. 2). However, it still has the ambitious aims of PAR. Brydon-Miller and Maguire (2009) say that PAR is an 'openly and unapologetically political approach to knowledge creation through and for action [...] in the sense of naming and unsettling relationships of power (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009, p. 80). Schools are where social change begins and 'PAR and other forms of critical practitioner inquiry are central to that struggle' (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009, p. 81).

Fundamental to all AR studies is a 'respect for people and the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action' (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009, p. 83). Moreover, with the development of the Internet, ideas can easily be spread across the

globe, thus increasing the ‘potential of practitioner research to make a important contribution to the collective, collaborative endeavour of enquiring about and improving learning and teaching practices’ (Burton and Bartlett, 2005, p. 1). The international nature of OCPs has given this AR study the potential to reach outside of the small reality where the research is set.

3.3.1. The role of Action Research methodology

AR has its roots in writing by Lewin (Baumfield et al., 2017; McAteer, 2014), who suggested that social studies should ‘concern[s] itself with two rather different types of questions, namely the study of general laws of group life and the diagnosis of a specific situation (Lewin, 2015, p. 145)’. Although Lewin’s study was not specific to education, some academics, for example, Hargreaves (2007), suggested that teaching should become a research-based profession, similar to that of medicine. However, scholars such as Elliott (2007) pointed out that medical research is based on statistical generalisations that are not suitable for education and proposed case-study teacher-research as an alternative. On the other hand, Oakley (2007) noted the lack of a functional research database in education and raised the question of the validity of qualitative research in the field.

According to Lesha (2014), the rejection of practitioner research by conventional academics was that they felt threatened by change. ‘Indeed, some academics consider research produced by practising teachers to be a ‘different’ kind of knowledge’ (Baumfield et al., 2017, p. 38), less prestigious (Burns, 1999) and ‘a lesser partner in the university/school knowledge and research binary’ (Thomson and Gunter, 2011, p. 27). There has been serious discussion of the role of research and theory in Education over the past fifty years (Hammersley, 2007) and the validity of the professional ‘insider’

researcher instead of that of an ‘outsider’. The former being research done by a practising teacher or professional and the latter by university-based academics (Thomson and Gunter, 2011; Costley et al., 2010).

The strongest argument for ‘outsider’ research is that university academics have the benefit of anonymity that teachers do not have by being strangers to the school system. They claim that the vision ‘insiders’ have is not only biased, but data can be damaged by the power relationships between practitioners and their participants (Thomson and Gunter, 2011). Nevertheless, some postmodern literature asserts that we are all separate entities and all outsiders in one way or another (Denzin, 2006). On the other hand, scholars promoting insider AR believe that the lack of understanding by the ‘outsider’ can lead to ‘misinterpret[ation] of local meanings and practices’ (Thomson and Gunter, 2011, p. 19) as there is no substitute for a practitioner’s experience and understanding of their workplaces.

Familiarity with the research settings is beneficial and provides a wealth of topics for potential study (Costley et al., 2010). Teachers’ professional lives are dedicated to their learners’ requirements because they must constantly adapt and modify their teaching to fit national policies on curriculum and assessment (Baumfield et al., 2017). For this reason, teachers are potential action researchers by nature. Their enquiry questions serve to link the gaps between idealistic curriculum requirements and the reality of the classroom with themselves incorporated within the enquiry (Burns, 1999). Fittingly, theory feeds practice, and practice enhances theory in a constant spiral of transformation (Lesha, 2014). These are all factors that contribute to making AR a good choice for this investigation. For example, the researcher has first-hand knowledge of OCPs and teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Italian secondary school environments. However, it is also true that this could be a potential source of bias. Still, awareness, careful reflection, and input

from participants with contrasting viewpoints, such as Case-four teachers (C4T), have helped the researcher see the topic from different perspectives.

Most literature on the teacher/researcher binary comes from the university researcher perspective rather than from secondary school teachers themselves, especially in foreign languages where AR is not considered a true research methodology but rather a way to increase professional awareness and development. This is even though many great pedagogues such as John Dewey believed that educational goals and evaluating data could only be produced in practice (Burns, 1999). Lesha (2014), for example, considers AR to be ‘informal’ because ‘teachers are not academic researchers (Lesha, 2014, p. 384)’.

However, this study argues that teachers become academic researchers when they take on a research enquiry and that nowhere in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is the adjective ‘academic’ reserved for university personnel but for those who work for an ‘educational institution or environment; concerned with the pursuit of research, education, and scholarship’ (Anon, 2020). Therefore, teachers can still be described as ‘academic’ even if they work in secondary schools. In addition to disparagement regarding credibility as researchers, teachers face extra issues such as the lack of time, pressures of student examinations, the disapproval of work colleagues and often their lack of confidence (Burns, 1999). These factors all lead to a reluctance to share important findings compared to their university-employed peers (Baumfield et al., 2017).

Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out that teachers seldom use theory in their lessons in how theorists intended it to be used. Research has shown how teachers rarely use one method or even follow theoretical approaches but concoct a mixture and adaptations of various approaches according to what works for them. This is because much theory in Second

Language Acquisition (SLA) sees all learners as having the same needs and sociocultural contexts (Ortega, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). However, teachers are both users and creators of knowledge, and only they can understand their students' individual and complex sociocultural contexts (Johnson, 2006).

Furthermore, there is a gap between the work by the theorist and that of the teacher. Teachers are not expected to construct their own theory but to use that conceived by university academics. However, 'no theory of practice can be useful and usable unless it is generated through practice' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 39), and teachers have an experience-fed intuition about what is needed in certain situations. However, teacher-researchers lack time to produce highly sophisticated studies. Therefore, Kumaravadivelu (2001) suggests that they record and share what measures are useful in their individual, sociocultural contexts and highlight what needs to be changed to reach their teaching goals (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). The next section will discuss how AR can offer a suitable methodology to reach this goal.

3.3.2. Action Research in professional development

McAteer (2014) says that AR is a term coined for professional development programmes 'regardless of whether their work is of an action research nature or not' (McAteer, 2014, p. 11). Additionally, Hagevik et al. (2012) promotes it simply as a way 'for teachers to inquire into and improve their practice' (Hagevik et al., 2012, p. 675) as well as their 'knowledge and beliefs about the subject matter, teaching, children, and learning' and in other words, basically 'a productive means of professional development' (Hagevik et al. (2012, p. 683). Teachers' continuous professional development is key to school improvement, and research has shown that when teachers are active participants in the

learning process rather than passive ones in training events, ‘professional learning can be transformative and lead to school improvement’ (Aldridge, Rijken and Fraser, 2020, p. 18). Moreover, collaborative AR supports learner-centred approaches to teaching ‘that are largely grounded in reflection, inquiry and participant-driven experimentation and provide impetus for teachers to initiate change’ (Aldridge et al., 2020, p. 1).

AR differs from professional development programmes because it requires a research question, an issue, data and interpretive analysis in the same way as other qualitative methodology. Moreover, it is flexible, operating exploratory and interpretive methods, and it can also be quantitative (Burns, 1999). Above all, data collecting techniques in AR should be a part of teaching rather than labour-intensive additions to already busy workloads. Likewise, data collection and analysis should not be separated because ‘the whole point of action research is that analysing the data, interpreting it and developing theories about what it means, are constantly fed back into the practice’ (Burns, 1999, p. 155). This raises the question of when to stop the research cycle. The answer can be theoretically driven, but it usually depends on time and resources. It could be as little as one research spiral if it gives a sufficient understanding of the research questions or a multi-dimensional release of research spirals leading in new directions (Burns, 1999).

Baumfield et al. (2017) give three useful pieces of advice for developing a plan to collect data: 1) to consider potential audiences; 2) to imagine a person who might not be willing to use the intervention being explored and focus on them when searching for evidence and 3) to engage colleagues as enquirers rather than research subjects (Baumfield, 2017). By following these recommendations, collected data becomes more representative of all participants and less susceptible to researcher bias because it provides multiple perspectives (Alexakos, 2015). In the case of this study, the readers are academics in the

field of education and fellow secondary school Modern Foreign Language (MFL) teachers (1); the colleagues and co-enquirers are OCP users in C5T (3); Additionally, although workplace EFL colleagues were not involved at all in the initial study of this enquiry, in the main study they became the participants who constituted C4T, thus supplying a contrasting voice (2) since they had chosen not to integrate OCPs in their curricula at the time of the study.

In addition, and as mentioned before, the researcher worked with other EFL teachers in a small team of three teachers from other schools and countries (Italy, Norway and Sweden) in the initial study and with eight in the final one (the researcher was included in the main study but not the initial one). Although one of the teachers in the final study also took part in the initial one (data from this teacher is counted twice), the final number of individuals were considered to be eleven. This group became C5T in the main study and AR collaborators. As McAteer (2014) points out, *a priori* (knowledge before experiences) (McAteer, 2014, p. 40) is very different from *a posteriori* (knowledge derived from experience) (McAteer, 2014, p. 42). One of the features of AR, is that the end of each cycle heralds the beginning of a new one and acts ‘as a launchpad for fresh investigations’ (McAteer, 2014, p. 44). Therefore, the additions of Case-two students (C2S), Case-three students (C3S) and C4T into the MCS, the evolution of the OCPCluster and the development of C5T as AR collaborators are all the results of three AR cycles.

3.3.3. AR spiral

The research proposal and the main study of this enquiry initially followed Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart and Zuber-Skerritt’s (2002) spiral approach that sees AR as a four-phase reiterating cycle of ‘planning, acting, observing and reflecting’ (Altrichter et al.,

2002, p. 130) (see Appendix E.4.). This proved to be useful in describing the development from the initial to the main study (see Appendix E.1.) as described in the following paragraph. However, as Burns (1999) implies, this model is oversimplified and ignores the complexity of emergent practices. This study is regarded as an ongoing spiral of reflection and self-development rather than a series of repetitive cycles (Mackay, 2016) and thus, uses Burns's (1999, pp. 35-38) eleven-phase framework as a basis upon which to organise progress (see Appendix E.4.). However, although these phases are intended to be flexible (Burns, 1999), this study will present them without numbers and use the word *process* rather than *steps* in order to emphasise the emerging and overlapping nature of this AR study. In addition, it is important to note that although the following procedure is narrated and reported in sequential order, it was not generated that way. They were overlapping processes of continual reflection and examination beginning with the initial study and continuing up until the printing of the thesis, as explained below:

- ◇ Exploring – The exploratory process that resulted in the research questions and the modification of them;
- ◇ Identifying – Processes of observations and literature research further refined the AR procedure;
- ◇ Planning – The process of developing a plan to collect data;
- ◇ Collecting data – The process of collecting data through the chosen means;
- ◇ Analysis and reflection – The process of analysing and reflecting upon collected data;
- ◇ Hypothesising/speculating – Processes of making assumptions or predictions based upon collected data;

- ◇ Intervening – The process of modifying classroom and research approaches based upon hypothesis made;
- ◇ Observing – The process of examining the effects of interventions;
- ◇ Reporting –The process of verbalising activities; data collection and results;
- ◇ Writing – The final process of drafting, re-drafting and producing this thesis;
- ◇ Presenting – Processes of sharing the AR to a wider audience (List adapted from Burns, 1999, pp. 35-38).

Figure one illustrates both Altrichter et al.'s (2002) four-phase AR cycle and Burns's (1999) eleven-phase one, on a spiral adapted from Burns (1999, p. 33). Table two shows a detailed chronological account of this AR study following Burns's (1999) eleven-phase framework.

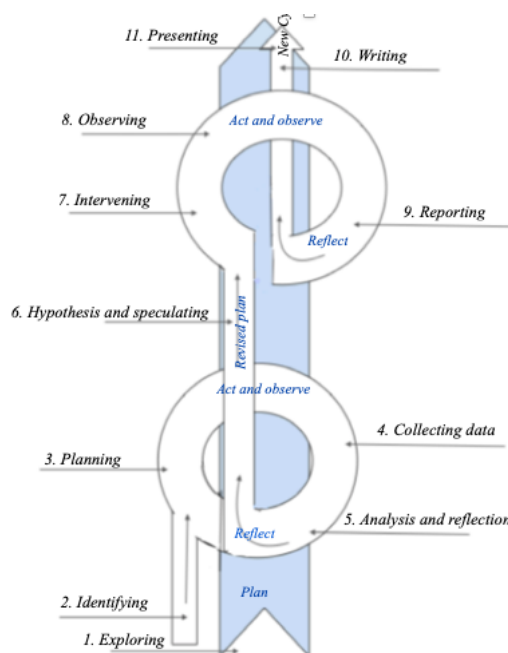


Figure 1: AR Spiral adapted from Burns (1999, p. 33)

Table 2: Detailed chronological account of the three AR cycles making up this study using Burns's (1999) framework

AR: Cycle One: The Initial Study	
Exploring	A research proposal was submitted to the OU after careful reflection on the researcher's long experience as an EFL teacher in secondary schools in South Italy and the more recent experience of teaching EFL through using OCPs.
Identifying	<p>Extensive reading of literature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gap was identified in literature regarding the area of EFL, OCPs, CALL and secondary school education; • CHAT methodology was chosen with mixed data-collecting methods; • The main research question was decided upon.
Planning	<p>The planning involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining the research to headteacher and participants, asking them for signed permission to do the research; • The preparation of forms and information material (see Section 3.8. and Appendix C.); • An application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to obtain ethics permission (see Section 3.8.); • Writing various progress reports (PR02 in Oct. 2017; PR03 in January 2018 and PR04 in March 2018); • The construction of initial sub-questions; • The initiation of two OCPs using eTwinning and WordPress and two Erasmus plus OCPs using eTwinning and various social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (see Appendix A.3.).

Collecting data	<p>Quantitative data were collected from tick-box Likert-style surveys that were created with Google Forms. The links were sent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCP colleagues (Later to become C5T); • Students from the Liceo Linguistico (years ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen) in the school where the researcher teaches; • The students' parents. All the surveys were sent out in English.
	<p>Qualitative data were collected from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One face-to-face interview with students who would later become part of C1S; • One face-to-face interview with an Italian EFL teacher who would later become one of C5T; • Two online open question questionnaires with two teachers living in Norway and Sweden also making up part of the future C5T.
Hypothesising and speculating	<p>As data were collected and analysed, it became ever more evident that the CHAT methodology would not provide the data necessary to answer the main research question.</p>
Intervening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHAT methodology was changed to AR, and new sub-questions were constructed in order to answer the main research question; • More literature was reviewed in the area of AR and case studies.
Observing	<p>Various classes were observed while working on OCPs, and the differences among courses were noted.</p>

Reporting	A progress report (PR04 in March 2018) was drawn up in preparation for the initial study (April 2020).
Writing	The initial study of this thesis was written up and submitted to the OU in April 2018.
Presenting	<p>The initial study of this thesis was presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At various online conferences with the OU; • In-person, at the annual conference in Brighton with the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

AR Cycle Two: The Main Study	
Exploring	<p>New permission was obtained from the HREC because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The change from mixed to qualitative data-collection tools; • The participants' who took part in the initial study would be slightly different to those taking part in the main one (see Section 3.3.5.).
Identifying	<p>Extensive reading was done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR methodology and Burns (1999) in particular; • SCT, drawing from Vygotsky; • Pedagogical theory in SLA (see Section 2.5.).
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two OCPs were initiated, and the two Erasmus plus OCPs began in 2017 were continued (see Appendix A.3);

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two progress reports (PR05 in Oct. 2019 and PR06 in Jan. 2019) were drawn up to form the basis for the final literature review.
Collecting data	<p>Quantitative data were collected from:</p> <p>Open-question questionnaires were sent to teachers and students attending secondary schools in other cities and countries, later to become C3S and C5T.</p>
	<p>Qualitative data were collected from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six face-to-face interviews with C1S from one year-eleven class; A whole class of twenty-one students were asked to write an email (see Appendix F.4. for age equivalents in the UK, Italy and other countries); One face-to-face interview with a year-twelve class of the same course. This was the same class as the one interviewed for the initial study (see Appendix B).
Analysis and reflection	<p>The analysis of the data was begun:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the data collected from the open-question questionnaires collected from the teachers and students attending secondary schools in other cities and countries; From the data collected from the students attending the Liceo Linguistico, later to become C1S. <p>The uniformity of results from the data showed that in order to answer the research question, the study would need contrasting cases.</p>

Hypothesising and speculating	<p>The data collected until this point was subjective. This was because all students interviewed from the researchers' school were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated to learn EFL; • Did more hours of EFL per week than students in other kinds of Italian Licei; • Working at a higher level on the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) than other classes in this particular secondary school and perhaps others; • The students who submitted open-question questionnaires and who attended secondary schools in other cities and countries offered a contrast. Still, since they were anonymous, it was difficult to give any detailed definition to their data. <p>Likewise, all teachers taking part in the open-question questionnaires and working in secondary schools in other cities and countries were already using OCPs. This meant that the data collected from these teachers would be predisposed to using OCPs.</p>
Intervening	A multiple case study was adopted after extensive reading on the subject, drawing mostly from Stake (2006);
Observing	Contrasting cases were needed to give a more balanced picture of how OCPs could support EFL teachers and learners in secondary school education.
Reporting	<p>This second AR cycle was presented online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Online International Doctoral Research Conference in Education 2020; • With the Liverpool John Moores University;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online at the EdD Colloquium with the Oxford Brookes University, School of Education.
Writing	The writing up of a progress report (PR07 in June 2019) laid the foundations for the final methodology chapter.

AR Cycle Three: The Final Stage	
Exploring	<p>Extensive reading was done on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR methodology (see Section 3.3.); • MCS research framework (see Section 3.4.); • Thematic analysis (see Section 3.7.).
Identifying	The next progress report (PR08 in Sept. 2019) laid the foundations for the data and analysis chapter of this thesis.
Planning	<p>In order to give the MCS a single identity, it was given the name OCPCluster, and the following cases were created:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Liceo Linguistico classes became C1S; • Two classes that did not attend the Liceo Linguistico were invited to join the research. These classes were attending the Liceo Economico Sociale in the school where the researcher was working and became C2S; • Students attending secondary schools in other cities and countries were grouped to create C3S; • Three EFL teachers working at the same school as the researcher were invited to join the research. Since they were not using OCPs at the time of the study but had had some

	<p>experience in the past, they supplied a contrast to C5T, who were enthusiastic users of OCPs. This case was called C4T;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers working in secondary schools in other cities and countries, and users of OCPs, were grouped together and called C5T.
Collecting data	<p>In addition to the data already collected from C1S in cycle two, data were collected from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four face-to-face interviews with C2S in small groups; • Fifty-seven open-question questionnaires submitted by students attending secondary schools in other cities and countries; • A sum of three face-to-face interviews; one from each of the three teachers working at the same school as the researcher and making up C4T. These teachers were not using OCPs at the time of the study; • Three individual open-question questionnaires from teachers who were working in secondary schools in other cities and countries, including the researcher, and who were using OCPs at the time of the study (C5T); • Five anonymous online open-question questionnaires answered by teachers who were working in secondary schools in other cities and countries and who were using OCPs at the time of the study (C5T).

	<p>Qualitative data from the initial study came from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One face-to-face interview with a group of C1S; • One face-to-face interview with an Italian EFL teacher who was working in a secondary school in a different town (C5T); • Two individual open-question questionnaires from two teachers working in secondary schools in other cities and countries and using OCPs at the time of the study (C5T).
Analysis and reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis was used for analysis with the aid of a QDAS called Quirkos. Burns's (1999) five-stage framework was used to analyse data (see Section 4.3. and Appendix E.3.)
Hypothesising and speculating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings were reported thematically under the four RSQs and were organised around six main themes: <i>1) Language and communication skills, 2) Motivation, 3) Learning communities, 4) Difficulties, 5) Theoretical perspectives, 6) Professional development;</i> • Themes were illustrated with excerpts from the dataset and discussed regarding the literature reviewed.
Intervening	<p>Charts and tables were drawn up to portray the results of the study in a clearer way.</p>
Observing	<p>The main research question was answered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reference to the findings from the four RSQs; • Drawing upon SCT to explain the observations.
Reporting	<p>Progress reports were written regularly to prepare the basis for each chapter and to analyse and reflect upon the AR progress and changes that needed to be made:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR 09 (Feb. 2020) • PR10 (May 2020) • PR11 (July 2020); • PR12 (Sep. 2020);
Writing	The final thesis was written up and submitted (October 31 st 2020).
Presenting	The researcher presented her work at the Open University.
Exploring	Further areas of research were identified (see Section 6.5.).

3.3.4. Initial study

As explained in the previous section of this study (see Section 3.3.3.), the first cycle of this AR comes from the initial study. Although the original proposal was for an AR case-study using Altrichter et al.'s (2002) spiral (Appendix E.4.), during the 'identifying' stage of the initial study, the methodology was changed to CHAT (Engeström, 2014).

Although CHAT research has its philosophical roots in SCT, its focus is on the workplace rather than the people involved. Therefore, mixed methods of data collection were used in the form of Likert-style questionnaires and collected from: a) The researcher's own students who were attending the Liceo Linguistico; b) Two face-to-face interviews, one with a group of students and one with an Italian colleague who was doing an OCP, but not with the researcher at the time of the interview; c) Two open-question questionnaires with teachers from other schools and countries who were collaborating with the researcher on OCPs at the time of the study. In the 'hypothesising and speculating' phase of the research, it was evident that the data were not providing a satisfactory answer to the research question and was changed to AR in the 'intervening' phase. The only data carried on to the main study from the initial one was from the two face-to-face interviews from Case-one

students (C1S) and two individual open-question questionnaires (C5T). These data were useful because they enriched the final dataset. The two face-to-face interviews provided perspectives from a second Liceo Linguistico class for C1S and an extra form of data for C5T that would otherwise have been made up from only open-question questionnaires. In addition, the two individual-open-question questionnaires augmented the dataset that would have otherwise been smaller.

3.3.5. The Main study

The main study made up a second and third AR cycle (Burns, 1999). After reflecting upon the data analysed in the initial study, interventions were made to modify the research process. Although the initial study had already been given a favourable opinion by the Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (see Section 3.8. and Appendix C.2.), the researcher contacted the HREC to inform them about the intended amendments to the enquiry before beginning the main one. They answered by asking for information concerning the main changes, which were the following:

- Parents would no longer be included in the study;
- The research would be extended to more students and teachers but would not be collecting personal details, and all participants' names and identity would be protected;
- The electronic questionnaires distributed to participants would invite written answers rather than just tick-box answers.

The Chair of the HREC explained there would be no need to make a new application because the responses were fully explanatory and the original application would be updated and filed. Data for the main study were collected over ten months, with the research evolving as is characteristic of AR. At the beginning of the main study, the

intention was to interview just one class (as well as using the interview data from the initial study), the one that had had the most experience with OCPs and with whom the researcher had the most teaching time, making them a practical choice for interviews. Likewise, teacher participants were all AR collaborators and members of the same OCPs as the researcher at the beginning of the main study.

However, the homogeneity of using these single cases of students and teachers was worrying because only certain perspectives of learning and teaching EFL with OCPs was being studied, and so any findings were likely to be biased. The viewpoints were of students who were motivated to learn EFL and teachers who were using OCPs at the time of study and were likely to believe that they were a useful addition to the curriculum. For this reason, contrasting views were needed. Another difficulty influencing the main study was the lack of space for conducting interviews. This was aggravated because during the summer holidays between the initial and main studies, an earthquake made the school premises unsafe, and the students and staff were moved to another building which was far too small. Therefore, finding extra space for face-to-face interviews was impossible, and so interviews were conducted in the classroom or in the Information Technology (IT) laboratory with other students working in the background.

In addition to the transformation from CHAT in the initial study to AR in the main one, there were various other modifications that evolved as the main study progressed. Firstly, at the beginning of the main study, all student participants attended the Liceo Linguistico and were likely to be motivated to learn EFL (later to become C1S). This would have resulted in biased data that lacked perspective from those who might not be so enthusiastic about the subject. For this reason, two new classes from the course specialising in Liceo Economico Sociale were invited to join the research, eventually becoming Case-two

students (C2S). These classes had numerous Special Educational Needs (SEN) students, two of whom had severe learning disabilities. C3S were also new to the main study and consisted of students from other schools and countries whose teachers were part of the AR. However, unlike the many Likert-type questions in the structured questionnaires used in the initial study, the online questionnaires for the main study consisted of just three open questions.

At the beginning of the main study, the only teachers involved were the ones from other schools and countries who were committed OCP users. To address this source of bias, three EFL teachers working at the same school as the researcher were invited to join the study, who were not using OCPs at the time of the study, creating C4T of this enquiry. C4T was made up of two experienced secondary-school EFL teachers and one EFL teacher with little experience in secondary-school education but with many years working as a Cambridge English Assessment teacher and examiner. She was employed as a SEN teacher at the researcher's school at the time of study and knew about OCPs because she was helping a student in C2S with OCP activities. C5T teachers made up the AR collaborating team and were teachers who did not work at the same school as the researcher but who used OCPs at the time of interviewing. The researcher was included in this case.

3.3.6. Research questions

Main research question:

How can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in a secondary school setting?

Sub-research questions:

1. How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?
2. How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?

3. Have teachers and students encountered any difficulties and drawbacks while using OCPs? If so, what were they?
4. How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum?

3.4. Method: Multiple Case Study

This section justifies the choice of using an MCS approach as a suitable qualitative method of data collection for this study and discusses its use with the AR methodology. It rationalizes the tools used to gather data and provides details on processes of construction and implementation of MCS as well as the researcher's role as an interviewer.

The expression MCS can be used interchangeably with collective and multi-site case studies (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, 2010). All of these are useful ways of investigating a contemporary phenomenon that is common to various settings and contexts, but this study will use the term MCS to avoid confusion. Cross-case comparisons in MCS is an appropriate qualitative method for drawing generalizations from the whole study that can be applied to more than one group of people (Mills et.al., 2010). For this reason, this research encompassed five varying perspectives, all responding to the same main research question. Stake (2006) suggests giving the MCS a collective name in order to draw attention to its single identity. Therefore, this MCS was named OCPCluster to describe the fact that all five cases were bound together by OCPs, EFL and secondary schools, despite their sociocultural differences.

Although some researchers use case study as a methodology in its own right (Cresswell, 2003; Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster, 2000a), this enquiry presents it as a way of 'adding

to experience and improving understanding' (Stake, 2000, p. 25). In addition, this study will be adopting an MCS approach because a single-case approach would generate modest generalization. Although qualitative researchers are not necessarily aiming at generalizability, there has been an increase in studies that can reach further afield in the area of education (Schofield, 2000). This could be either because funding agencies usually invest in research that satisfies as broad an area as possible, or because academics want their research to benefit education systems in other communities (Schofield, 2000). The latter is true in the case of this enquiry.

In order to improve generalizability in case-study research, analytic induction is often used and is similar to the technique used in this study because it begins without a hypothesis and works upon evidence gathered from data (Preissle, 2008). However, an important difference between analytic induction and MCS is that, in order to create generalizable theory, the former method creates boundaries in applicability by specifically searching for certain cases (Preissle, 2008), while MCS explores those with contrasting viewpoints. By using cases where the occurrence of the phenomenon under investigation is likely to be found, results will inevitably be one-sided (Robinson, 2000). This can be a problem if an attempt is made to generalize beyond the core occurrence of the phenomena. Instead, to increase generalizability, it is imperative to study cases where the phenomenon has not occurred (Gomm et al, 2000b). For this reason, this enquiry expanded the OCPCluster to include C4T that is made up of teachers who do not use OCPs and C2S who are students who did not choose to specialise in EFL but are obliged to study it.

Qualitative researchers refuse generalizability as an aim and often use thick description to describe experiences as an alternative to collecting data from a wide reach of people, such as statistical data collected in quantitative methods, or from people with contrasting

viewpoints such as MCS (Denzin, 2007). One of the reasons for this rejection is because qualitative researchers believe that preconception is unavoidable in all areas of research since knowledge and understandings are influenced by sociocultural factors such as personal experience, culture, time, residence and so on. Furthermore, the researcher's rhetoric might not only influence participants, but probably the readers too, and this is especially true in qualitative enquiry.

In fact, it is not possible to be completely objective even in data selection because all choices will depend upon the research question and the researcher's worldview (Stake, 2006). The point of generalizable data is that it can be applied to other cases, but this is not always possible with qualitative research. Therefore, in order to be valid, researchers need to consider the 'internal validity' of their work and whether the evidence supports the way that the researcher has described it (Schofield, 2000, p. 71). Eckstein (2000) suggests applying theory when interpreting cases to help mitigate partiality, although it is unlikely that a theory exists for all cases, so multiple comparative case studies provide the most widely applicable way of reducing the effects of researcher bias (Eckstein, 2000).

The validity of any case-study analysis depends upon theoretical perspectives rather than on statistical interpretation and therefore requires descriptions and explanations of experiences from several people and over various settings (Stake, 2000). Stake (2006) advises operating between four and ten cases in MCS, to illuminate some of the many contexts of an issue, making sure that all cases are relevant to the research question and can provide diversity and complexity. In addition, the advocacies Stake (2006) makes about MCS are very similar to those of PAR (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009) and are all true to this study (see Appendix E.2.). For example, researchers are committed to case study research or/and AR; they advocate rationality and democratic processes to achieve

positive social change; they want their voices and those of the underprivileged to be heard; they advocate a democratic society and, finally, even when a study is done well, they recognise that the research question (or questions) will never be fully answered (Stake, 2006).

3.5. Defining the context of the enquiry

The setting of this AR study is a secondary school in a small rural town in the south of Italy where the researcher teaches EFL. Since students have little opportunity to use English in their everyday lives, their motivation to study is poor. Travel is a possible answer, but few can afford to pay elevated expenses of language courses abroad or even fit the requirements in the case of exchanges, such as Erasmus plus programmes, that are often reserved for the highest achieving students. However, as Gilleran et al. (2017) point out, OCPs, such as those using the eTwinning platform, can be useful tools in providing an alternative (or support) to travel.

As noted earlier, three of the five cases in this study (C1S, C2S and C4T) were attending, (or working at) the secondary school where the researcher was working, so it is important to introduce the context. Firstly, it is to be noted that the south of Italy is less industrialised than the north and is stereotyped for organised crime and poverty. In fact, the results from the Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of Education Systems, which in Italian is the ‘Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione’ (INVALSI), highlighted the discrepancy in EFL levels in southern secondary

education (Ajello, 2019).² It showed that by the end of elementary school (eleven years old), students living in the south are within the average level of the country, while on reaching level eight (fourteen), they drop to significantly lower than the rest of Italy (Below A1, which is the lowest level on the CEFR scale). This situation continues until the end of secondary education, at nineteen years old, when the South of Italy is far behind the rest of the country with few students reaching B2 (Upper-intermediate), and most of them not even reaching B1 (Intermediate) (Ajello, 2019). In addition, almost thirty per cent of eighteen to twenty-four year-olds from this area are neither in education nor employment (OECD, 2018). These figures suggest that urgent attention needs to be given to secondary education in southern Italy in general and EFL in particular.

3.5.1. Participants

Although the OCPCluster is made up of five groups, it is treated as one entity (Stake, 2006). The name OCPCluster was given to underline this factor (see Appendix B.7.). It is made up of two main categories: teachers and students, of which there are three student groups: C1S, C2S and C3S and two teacher ones: C4T and C5T. Table three shows participants from C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T and the OCPs they were working on (see Appendix A.3.). On the other hand, C4T were EFL teachers who were not using OCPs at the time of the study but had had some experience. Therefore, all five groups shared

² The INVALSI tests are standardised online assessments, whereby all Italian students are tested in three key areas: Italian, Mathematics and English. This is done three times throughout the students' school career: at the end of primary school, at the end of lower-secondary school and at the end of upper-secondary school. The INVALSI test in EFL at the end of upper-secondary education was introduced for the first time in 2019 to assess the learners' reading and listening comprehension at the B1 and B2 level of the CEFR. The reason for INVALSI assessment is to provide a description for schools, families, students, universities and so on, to understand the level of the students, the school and the location (INVALSI, 2019).

similar characteristics regarding OCPs, EFL and secondary schools but had variations regarding their sociocultural backgrounds.

In order to avoid ambiguity among the three student cases, extra information is given in three areas: 1) Nationalities, 2) Linguistic backgrounds and 3) Recruitment. Firstly, students from C1S and C2S are Italian from small villages and towns in rural and coastal areas in the South of Italy. C1S was made up of fifty-three students from two year-eleven classes (see Appendix F.4. for age equivalents in the UK, Italy and other countries). Students from one of these classes were interviewed twice: once when they were in year eleven and again when they were in year twelve. On the other hand, twenty-five students made up C2S, but although these students were also from two classes, one was year eleven, and the other one was year thirteen.

In contrast to C1S and C2S, C3S was made up of students attending secondary schools in other cities and countries and provided anonymous data through open-question questionnaires. For this reason, the researcher did not know where C3S lived but that they would have been between fourteen and nineteen years old. Anonymous questionnaires were used to offer a contrast to the answers given by the researcher's own students in C1S and C2S, who power-relations might have influenced from their teacher as a researcher (see Section 3.8.1.) (McAteer, 2014). Secondly, it is important to clarify the linguistic backgrounds of C1S, C2S and C3S. Although C1S and C2S were both students from the researcher's classes, the former attended the Liceo Linguistico, and the latter was attending the Liceo Economico Sociale (see Chapter one of this thesis). This meant that C1S had experienced more hours of EFL than all other courses and were expected to be more motivated to study it.

Table 3: Participants and OCPs

OCP Cluster Case	Participants	Location	Type	OCP	Data Collection Tools and results
C1S	Italian Students (Year 11s)	Italian Liceo (the same school as the researcher)	Liceo Linguistico	Content-based (SDGs) (Zielonka and Fearn, 2018; 2019)	Eight group face-to-face group interviews and 21 emails
				Content-based (EU) (Fearn, 2018)	
				Language (Fearn, 2019)	
				Erasmus plus (Fearn and Hessová, 2019; Fearn and Salkauskiene 2019.	
C2S	Italian students (Year-11s and 13s), including numerous SEN students	Italian Liceo (the same school as the researcher)	Liceo Economico Sociale	Content-based (SDGs) (Zielonka and Fearn, 2019)	Four group face-to-face group interviews
				Language (Fearn, 2019)	
				Content-based (the Solar System) (Šojat and Jukić, 2019)	
C3S	Fifty-seven students from other schools and countries (Year 10 to 13s)	A variety of schools in other schools and countries	Mixed	Possibly the content-based and language OCPs from 2019 (Zielonka and Fearn, 2019; Fearn, 2019).	Fifty-seven open question online questionnaires
C4T	Three Italian EFL teachers	Italian Liceo (the same school as the researcher)	Non-OCP-users		Three individual face-to-face interviews
C5T	Eleven EFL teachers from other schools and countries (including the researcher)	A variety of schools from other cities and countries	OCP users	All OCP (Zielonka and Fearn, 2018; 2019; Fearn, 2018; Fearn and Hessová, 2019; Fearn and Salkauskiene 2019; 2019; 2019; Šojat and Jukić, 2019).	One face-to-face interview, five individual and five anonymous online open-question questionnaires.

As explained in the first chapter of this thesis, students in all Italian Licei need to reach a level of B2 in the CEFR, regardless of the course, they choose (Gisella, 2020). However, the EFL textbooks for these classes were of different levels. C1S were asked to buy a textbook aimed at B1+ to B2 on the CEFR framework, such as Puchta, Stranks and Lewis-Jones (2016). In contrast, the textbook the students from the two year-eleven C2S classes had been asked to buy was aimed at A2 CEFR level, for example, McKinlay and Hastings (2012). On the other hand, the older students from the two year-twelve classes were using a book that is not based on the CEFR framework but has texts and exercises from English Literature and Social Sciences, such as Piccoli (2014). Again, as C3S was anonymous and from various countries and schools, it is impossible to understand the students' linguistic background.

Finally, as all three student cases were secondary school students, the teachers chose to participate in OCPs, and the students participated as part of their normal English curriculum. On the other hand, the choice was given to C1S and C2S on whether they wanted to participate in this research, and all students were enthusiastic about taking part. However, this presented an ethical issue on how to select students without hurting feelings. This was a concern in the initial study, but in the main study, students were selected casually. For example, in C2S, those who were left behind on school trips were interviewed. On the other hand, for C1S, it was those who had finished their OCP activities earlier who were interviewed. This process is explained in more detail later on in this thesis (see Sections 3.8. and Section 4.2.). As far as C3S were concerned, the link to the open-question questionnaire for students was given to C5T, who were EFL teachers collaborating with the researcher on the OCPs in question (see Table two and Appendix

A.3.). This was done through the eTwinning platform and email. This might have reached a large number of teachers, but only five answered.

3.5.2. OCPs

This AR study included seven different OCPs throughout the two-year study period, all of them using the eTwinning platform. Each OCP was distinctive for several reasons, for example, a) The focus and content; b) The teachers and students involved; c) Where participants came from; d) When they were made and how long they lasted; e) Which AR cycle they were related to; f) Other platforms that were used in addition to eTwinning. This information is described in detail below:

1) Be the Change, Take the Challenge (Zielonka and Fearn, 2018):

This OCP focused upon the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and was the context of data-collection from C1S and C5T. The former were students from the Liceo Linguistico in the school where the researcher was teaching, while the latter were teachers living in other cities and countries, including the researcher. It lasted for one academic year, from September 2017 until June 2018 and was active on several platforms, including WordPress, Loomio and eTwinning. However, this study has concentrated on the OCP hosted on the eTwinning platform. It was initiated and run by the researcher and another participant from C5T who provided two sets of data from individual online open-question questionnaires (*C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 1, 05/2018* and *C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 5, 06/2019*). The eTwinning platform for this OCP had forty-three teachers and five hundred and ninety-two students registered from other

European countries and some neighbouring ones such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Republic of Moldova, Tunisia and Ukraine. Finally, it was connected to *Cycle One: The Initial Study* of this AR.

2) *Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning* (Fearn, 2018):

This OCP focused upon the European Union and operated exclusively on the eTwinning platform. It was initiated by the researcher and a SEN teacher from the same school as the researcher. However, the SEN teacher withdrew from the OCP before it began, leaving it to be run by the researcher and another five C5T teachers. Although there were fourteen teachers and sixty-one students registered on the eTwinning OCP platform, only six teachers and their students worked actively by contributing to the collaborative and communicative activities. Teachers came from six schools, comprising three schools in Italy (including the researcher's school), one in Portugal, one in Ukraine and one in Armenia. This OCP was active for one academic year, from September 2017 to June 2018 and was related to *Cycle One: The Initial Study*. Data regarding this OCP were collected from C1S and C5T.

3) *SOS-Water Sources are Alarming* (Fearn and Hessová, 2019):

This OCP was created to support an Erasmus plus mobility project that lasted for over two academic years from September 2017 until September 2019. Although it used various platforms such as WordPress, Facebook and others, this study has concentrated on the eTwinning OCP. It was a content-based OCP that focused upon the subject of water through the research of various topics in addition to EFL, such as Science, Law, Literature and others. Data relating to this OCP were collected from C1S and C5T, though the

researcher was the only member of C5T to be involved. Participants came from five schools: the researcher's school in Italy, a school in the Czech Republic, in Portugal, Romania and Turkey. Twenty-four teachers were registered on the eTwinning OCP, and seventy-three students from these countries. This OCP was initiated by the researcher and a Turkish teacher but run by the researcher and the Erasmus plus project coordinator from the Czech Republic. Finally, this OCP was considered during all three cycles of this AR study;

4) *Take Stereotyping out of Your Life* (Fearn and Salkauskiene, 2019):

This OCP also supported an Erasmus plus mobility project that lasted for over two academic years, from September 2017 until September 2019. It was also present on other platforms such as Weebly, Facebook and others, but this study has concentrated on the OCP hosted on the eTwinning platform. It focused on stereotyping through the study of school subjects such as Social Science, Humanities, Italian, MFLs, Religious Education and others. Data were collected from C1S and C5T, but the latter only included the researcher. It was initiated and run by the researcher and the Erasmus plus project coordinator from Lithuania and was considered across all three AR cycles;

5) *Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819* (Zielonka and Fearn, 2019)³:

This OCP followed on from the previous year's OCP on the SDGs. It lasted for one academic year, from September 2018 to June 2019 and was active on WordPress, Teams and Facebook with a total of almost two hundred teachers from across all continents. However, this study focused on the OCPs hosted on the eTwinning platform, where sixty-seven teachers and five hundred and eighty students were registered. It was initiated and run by the same people as in the first OCP, the teacher from C5T in Norway and the researcher, and it was considered for AR *Cycle Two: The Main Study* and *Cycle three: the final phase*. Data regarding this OCP were collected from C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T (all cases except C4T);

6) *Teach to Learn* (Fearn, 2019):

This OCP focused on language skills, such as grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills and so on, instead of being content-based as the other OCPs in this study. This OCP was only hosted on the eTwinning platform and had sixteen registered teachers and one hundred and eighty-two students. However, only seven teachers and their students worked actively by contributing to the collaborative and communicative activities. The seven teachers came from three schools in Italy, including the researcher's school, one in Sweden, two schools in Turkey and one school in Croatia. This OCP lasted one academic year, from September 2018 to June 2019. Finally, this OCP was active during AR *Cycle*

³ It is to be noted that the title of this OCP was a joint decision made by a small number of C5T. It refers to the academic year: 2018/2019

Two: The Main Study and *Cycle three: the final phase*, where data were collected from C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T (all cases except C4T).

7) *Solar 7.0* (Šojat and Jukić, 2019):

The OCP in this AR study was initiated on the eTwinning platform by two Science teachers in Croatia in March 2019. This OCP was intended for teachers of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the aim was to build a three-dimensional solar system using a 3D printer. EFL was used to search for information regarding the planets and the universe and communicate them to Croatian peers. The researcher joined this OCP in April 2019 and worked on it with C2S and their Physics teacher until June 2019.⁴ Six teachers and twenty-six students from two schools, one in Croatia and one in Italy, were registered on this OCP. Finally, *Solar 7.0* was related to *Cycle Three: The Final Stage*, where it was the context of data collection for C2S and C5T, but the latter only included the researcher.

3.6. Data-Collection Tools

Qualitative research is informed by the meanings individuals or groups give to a social issue (Cresswell, 2003). For this reason, data were collected in the participants' natural settings and focused upon the meaning that the participants gave to the matter of learning or teaching EFL with OCPs. Table four illustrates how importance was given to obtaining

⁴ *Solar 7.0* was joined especially for some of the students in C2S, who found Physics difficult.

multiple perspectives to understand the larger developing picture (Cresswell, 2003) by using the five tools listed below (see Appendix B):

- a. Face-to-face group interviews with students from the same school as the researcher (C1S and C2S);
- b. Face-to-face individual interviews with colleagues from the same school as the researcher (C4T) and one with a student (C1S) and one with a teacher teaching in another school but in the same area (C5T) (initial study);
- c. Individual online open-question questionnaires for teachers living at a distance from the researcher (C5T). These questionnaires used a different format to the open-question questionnaires described below. They were aimed at specific individuals and their experiences and used Google documents rather than Google forms so that the researcher could add questions. Therefore, these individual open-question questionnaires were not anonymous. There were six questions in three of them and ten and twelve in the other two;
- d. Online open-question questionnaires using Google forms, for students and teachers from other schools and countries to answer anonymously, with three and four questions consecutively (C3S and C5T);
- e. An email-writing activity (C1S) (see Appendix B.5.).

The choice of online open-question questionnaires as alternatives to face-to-face ones was predominantly due to distance. Precautions were taken to make open-question questionnaires as participant-friendly as possible. This was done by keeping them short, limiting the number of questions to only three for students (C3S) and four for teachers (C5T) (see Appendix B.6.), so they were more likely to be answered. In addition, care was taken to ensure that questions were not repetitive because participants like to speak about

new things. This also has the advantage of keeping data containable and easier to analyse (Gillham, 2001). Moreover, Gillham (2001) points out that online open-question questionnaires are similar to face-to-face interviews but with the benefit of already being written and eliminating the need for transcribing.

Table 4: Tools

Cases		Group face-to-face interviews	Individual face-to-face interviews	Emails	*Individual online open-question questionnaires	**Anonymous open-question questionnaires
C1S	Initial study	1				
	Main study	6	1	21		
C2S	Main study	4				
C3S	Main study					57
C4T	Main study		3			
C5T	Initial study		1		2	
	Main study				3	5
Students' total		11	1	21		57
Teachers' total			4		5	5
Total		10	5	21	5	62
* Open-question questionnaires using Google docs and designed with a teacher in mind. Questions were added beginning with six and reaching eleven;						
** Anonymous open-question questionnaires using Google forms. Three questions for students and four for teachers.						

However, the online open-question questionnaires used in this study differed from face-to-face interviews because there was no real-time contact. This meant that they lacked direct feedback and negotiation between interviewer and interviewee, meaning that there was no chance to clarify questions or incorporate spontaneity, including sympathy (or empathy) between interviewer and interviewee. Table five provides a detailed list of the OCPC cluster and all references. It shows which data were collected in the initial and main study, the number of male and female participants, their ages, the tools used for data collection and a brief description of each case.

Table 5: OCPCluster: a detailed description of cases, references and tools

Student cases	Reference	Study	Female participants	Male participants	Ages	Tools	Description
C1S	C1S, Group-Interview 1, 30/11/2017.	Initial	4	1	15/16	1 Face-to-face interviews	The researcher's students: Liceo Linguistico
	C1S, Group-Interview 2, 06/02/2019.	Main	1	1		2 Face-to-face interviews	
	C1S, Group-Interview 3, 14/2/2019.		1	0		Students interviewing each other	
	C1S, Group-Interview 4, 20/02/2019.		4	1		3 Face-to-face interviews	
	C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/02/2019.		3				
	C1S, Group-Interview 6, 03/04/2019.		3	1			
	C1S, Group-Interview 7, 13/05/2019.		2	2			
	C1S, Group-Interview 8, 27/05/2019.		8	0	17/18		
	C1S, emails, 27/03/2019.		19	2	15/16	21 Writing tasks	
C2S	C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019.	Main	3		*15/16	4 Face-to-face interviews	The researcher's students: Liceo Economico Sociale
	C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019.		**6		*17/18		
	C2S, Group-Interview 3, 13/ 05/2019.		**5	3	15/16		
	C2S, Interview 4, 22/05/2019.		**6	**2	*17/18		
C3S	C3S, Online Open-Question Questionnaire, 2019	Main	57		14-18	57 Online Open-Question Questionnaires	C5T's students from other schools and countries
Teacher Cases	Reference	Study	Female	Male	Experience	Tools	Location
C4T	C4T, Individual-Interview 1, 17/05/2019.	Main	1		Five years	3 Face-to-face interviews	The same school as the researcher
	C4T, Individual-Interview 2, 10/06/2019.		1		Little		
	C4T, Individual-Interview 3, 11/06/2019.		1		Many years		
C5T	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 1, 05/2018.	Initial	1		Many years	2 Individual online Open-Question Questionnaires.	Norway
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 2, 05/2018.		1				Sweden
	C5T, Individual-Interview 3, 14/11/2018.		1		Two years	1 Face-to-face interview	Southern Italy
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire, 4, 05/2019.	Main	1		The researcher: thirty years	1 Individual online Open-Question Questionnaires.	Southern Italy
	C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 05/2019.		Mixed			5 Online Open-Question Questionnaires	From other schools and countries (mixed)
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 5, 06/2019.		1		Many years	2 Individual online Open-Question Questionnaires.	Norway
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 6, 06/2019.			1	Little		Northern Italy

C1S was made up of the researcher's students from two classes, twenty-one from one class and thirteen from the other one. C1S were enrolled in the Liceo Linguistico and thus, were motivated EFL learners. Data were collected from this case using seven face-to-face group interviews that included the one done in the initial study, plus one individual face-to-face study with a single student summing twelve face-to-face interviews altogether. Each interview contained from one to eight students from year eleven who were fifteen or sixteen years of age except for the last interview made up of eight students of sixteen or seventeen years of age (year twelve). The whole of the year-eleven class wrote emails explaining the pros and cons of OCPs, altogether summing twenty-one emails;

C2S students also came from two of the researcher's classes and consisted of eleven students from year eleven and fourteen from year thirteen but were attending the Liceo Economico Sociale specialising in Human Sciences rather than EFL. C2S contained one girl with severe cognitive impairment and four students with Special Learning Needs (SEN) with learning difficulties and disabilities. Three students had had to repeat years in the past (see Appendix A.6.). This case was added to the study towards the end of the main study and provided four face-to-face group interviews with six to eight students per interview;

C3S consisted of fifty-seven students from other schools and countries, from between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, and who were doing projects in collaboration with the researcher's school but living in different countries. For this reason, online open-question questionnaires were used to collect data. The link was given to the AR collaborators who distributed the link to the open-question questionnaire among their classes. Fifty-seven were returned completed.

C4T consisted of three EFL teachers working at the same school as the researcher but who were not using OCPs at the time of the study, although they had had some experience of using them in the past. Data were collected from this case in individual face-to-face interviews, providing one consultation per teacher. Finally, C5T provided eleven sources of data from ten EFL teachers from other schools and countries, including the researcher, who were doing projects together at the time of this enquiry and who made up the AR team. One of the ten teachers gave data from two individual online open-question questionnaires, one in the initial study and another in the main study. The final dataset contained data gathered from one individual face-to-face interview from the initial study, five online open-question questionnaires, one from the initial study, and five online open-question questionnaires (see Appendix B).

Figure two shows the final student dataset that comprised ten face-to-face group interviews, one individual face-to-face interview, one was part of the initial study, twenty-one emails, and fifty-seven open-question questionnaires. In addition, the teachers provided four individual face-to-face interviews, of which one was part of the initial study, five individual online open-question questionnaires, of which two were from the initial study, and five anonymous online open-question questionnaires. The overall total summed sixteen face-to-face interviews, sixty-six online open-question questionnaires and twenty-one emails.

Overall total: 130 participants - 16 face to face interviews, 67 online open-question questionnaires and 21 emails

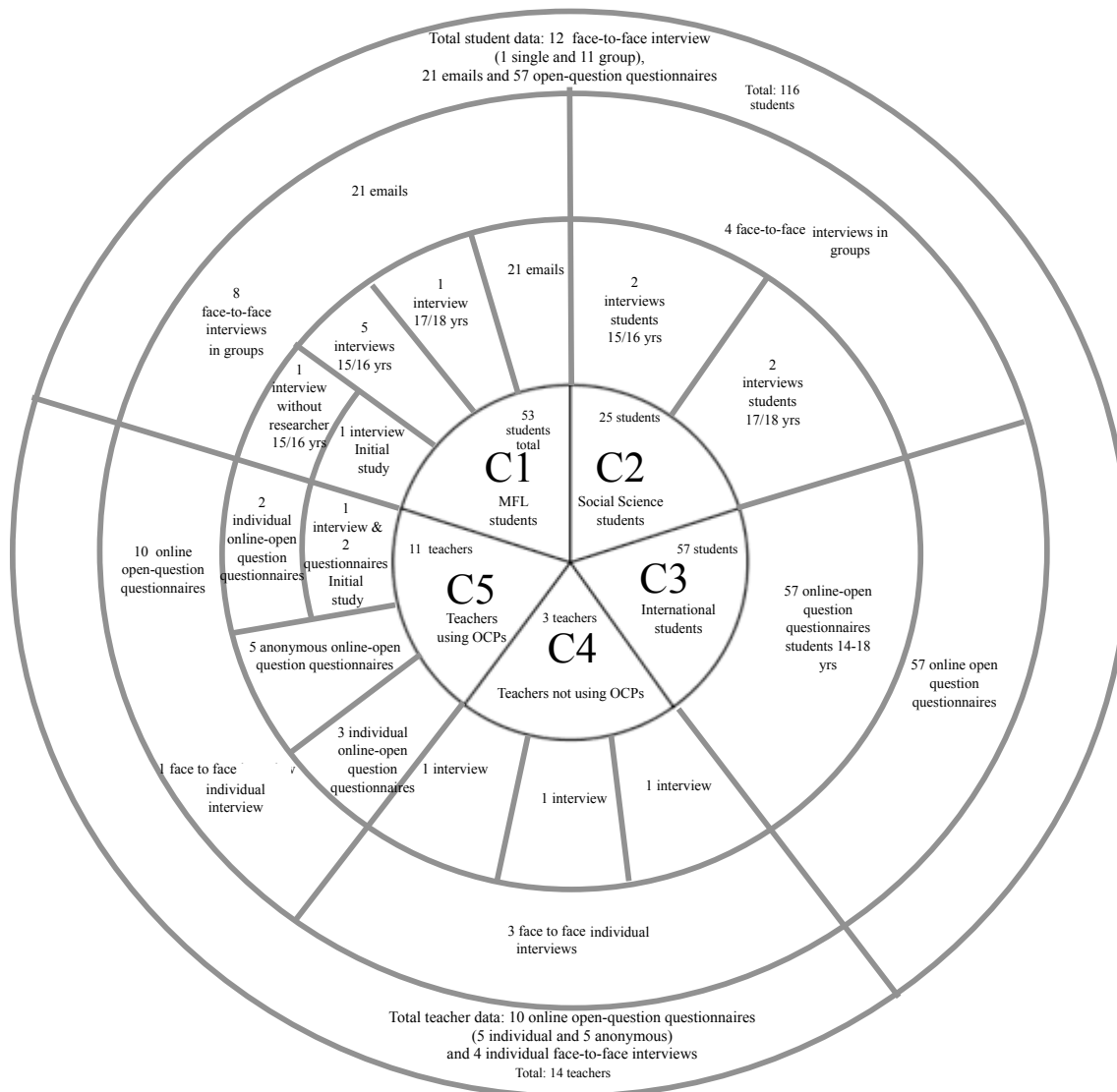


Figure 2: Data circle

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Students and teachers were given the option of being interviewed in either English or Italian. Still, questionnaires had to be in English because it was the language of communication among partners from other schools and countries. Face-to-face interview questions with students began with three open questions and were developed according to their answers (Appendix B.1.). Likewise, the students' open-question questionnaires had the same three questions but worded in a more precise way to account for levels in EFL (see Appendix B.2.). As far as teachers were concerned, face-to-face interviews began with the same four questions as the open-ended questionnaires made for teachers (see Appendix B.3.). Open-question questionnaires were intentionally short, so busy teachers and students would be more likely to complete them. A tick-box was added, giving participants the option to accept or refuse consent to use their answers for educational or research purposes, including publication (see Appendix C.3.). The individual open-question questionnaires were prepared especially for the intended teacher, who were given an information leaflet and consent form to sign. On the other hand, the email-writing activity was done by a class of twenty-one students who were asked to write an email to an imaginary friend and be as honest as possible, telling them about their OCP experience (see Appendix B.5. and B.6.). All interviewed teachers, students, and parents had signed a consent and assent form and were given information leaflets before the study began (see Appendices C.4.; C.5.; C.6.; C.7.; C.8.).

3.6.1. Sampling

As far as students were concerned, finding participants who were willing to participate in face-to-face interviews from the school where the researcher teaches was not at all problematic. Therefore, a pragmatic approach was taken by utilising time during lessons, for example, interviewing students who had finished their OCP activities early while the

rest of the class completed their tasks. Otherwise, when there were high numbers of absentees, those who were present were interviewed. This approach was not adopted during the initial study. On the contrary, time was wasted while waiting for an elusive spare hour when students would be free simultaneously with the researcher. The problem was that this happened only once in the whole academic year, and it was not ethical to ask students to stay behind after school because they were all commuters and they would have been late home. Learning from this resulted in the pragmatic approach adopted in the main study. As far as teachers were concerned, finding EFL teachers who had time to spare was especially difficult, particularly those working on OCPs (C5T), so open-question questionnaires were agreed upon (Appendix B.). On the other hand, the three teachers making up C4T were teaching at the same school as the researcher, and so spare time between lessons was used.

3.6.2. Transcribing

The first step in analysing data is transcribing audible and visible dialogue into written form. This is in itself an interpretive process involving judgements guided by the researcher's methodological assumptions since there are many ways to transliterate the same data depending on the level of accuracy and detail required as well as how the data will be represented (Bailey, 2008). In the case of this study, interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher as accurately as possible, which assisted in noticing unexpected occurrences. At the same time, Gibson and Brown (2011) warn against becoming too dependent on transcriptions, since they are second-hand experiences lacking the specific detail of the information such as settings, context and so on. For this reason, they advise listening several times to the recording while transcribing in order to better understand how to present the narrative in the final report.

Gibson and Brown (2011) claim the transcription stage should be valued as central to data orientation, since it is the best time to reflect upon the nature of the data and the possible themes and foci and help to avoid miscomprehension. Since most of the participants' first language (L1) is not English, it was unavoidable that data would be influenced to some level, either through the researcher's translation into English or by the participants'. Additionally, Burns (1999) warns researchers to ensure that questions are brief and clear when conversing with speakers of foreign languages, but since the researcher of this study speaks the face-to-face participants' L1 fluently, more flexibility was possible. In fact, as far as C1S was concerned, most of the interviews were carried out in English at the request of the students, but C2S preferred to use Italian.

Transcribing interviews was done on the same day that the interviews were completed for three reasons: firstly, it is easier to remember them and imprint important atmosphere and emotion into the text, such as silences and excitement, especially when translating from Italian into English; secondly, to prevent the work-load from accumulating and thus becoming a chore at the end of the data-collecting stage; and thirdly, reflection and familiarisation with data and interviews as they happened made it was possible to prepare and modify the ground for the next interview. It was for this reason that many important themes emerged as data were collected, thus giving space and sustenance to the AR itself by allowing it to develop naturally. This involved developing ideas and nurturing them back into practice (Burns, 1999). For example, the addition of other perspectives from groups of people with different sociocultural backgrounds and worldviews, such as those from C2S, C3S and C4T.

3.7. Thematic Analysis

This study has used thematic analysis as a flexible way of uncovering issues, similarities and differences of all types of communication (Allen, 2018). In addition, McAteer (2014) points out that it is particularly relevant for practitioner-research because it does not require specialised theoretical knowledge. The choice of using thematic enquiry for this study recognised it as a tool that is ‘unbounded by theoretical commitments — rather than a methodology (a theoretically informed, and confined, framework for research)’ (Clarke and Braun, 2016, p. 2).

In order to locate themes, researchers need to be familiar with their data, read it many times, and take detailed notes because the analysis is not a linear process. It is also essential to give satisfactory explanations of how themes work together to answer the research question and reassure the reader that rigorous and high-quality analysis has taken place (Guest et al., 2018). Moreover, and particularly significant to this study, thematic analysis can be used across various paradigms to identify and interpret data characteristics, and it works exceptionally well with AR. This is because its flexibility allows for the constant development and alterations made to the study during AR cycles. Even research questions do not need to be fixed permanently and can develop during coding and analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2016). These factors made thematic analysis a good choice for this study.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Regarding this research enquiry, permission was obtained from the OU’s Human Resources Ethical Committee for the Initial study, with subsequent confirmation for the

main study. After studying BERA (2018) and scholarship by Stutchbury, and Fox (2009), a table was drawn up (see Appendix C.1.) dividing research activity into six areas that would require ethical attention: 1) Research setting; 2) Contact and relationships; 3) Sampling strategy; 4) Data methods; 5) Recording information and 6) Storing data. This facilitated the itemisation of possible ethical concerns in order to take necessary precautions.

Firstly, the fact that this is an ‘insider’ research project raises concern because of both the researcher’s authority over student participants and her familiarity with teacher colleagues.

Therefore:

- ◇ All online questionnaires were anonymous, so participants could be honest in their answers and not worry about pleasing their teacher or the researcher;
- ◇ Before interviews, participants were assured that there was no right or wrong answer and that no one would be offended;
- ◇ A conscious effort was made to keep an open mind during analysis and reflection.

Secondly, the area of contact and relationships highlighted a further five areas of concern:

a) Access to the participants; b) Permission and assent from the participants; c) The protection of participants; d) The disclosure of findings and e) Context and differences that need to be respected.

a) Access to participants:

- ◇ First of all, the headteacher was approached informally, and the EdD proposal was illustrated. The headteacher checked with authorities that the researcher could carry

out research while working for the Italian Ministry of Education. On confirmation, a formal letter in writing was given to the headteacher, who then responded with written permission to use the school as a research setting (see Appendices C.10.; C.11.);

- ◇ The British Council and L'Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa (The National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research) (INDIRE) were informed of the researcher's intention to use the eTwinning website for research motives (see Appendix C.9.).

b) In order to obtain permission and assent and to ensure that all participants had understood the research and what was required of them, the researcher prepared the following forms in both Italian and English:

- ◇ Detailed information leaflets and permission forms were prepared for teachers and parents of minors and students (see Appendices C.6.; C.7.; C8.);
- ◇ Assent forms for minors were also dispensed to be sure that younger participants knew what the study involved (see Appendix C.5.);
- ◇ A tick-box was added to all Google forms, explaining the research and possible publication and giving participants the option to refuse or accept the inclusion of their data in the study (see Appendix C.3.).

c) In order to protect participants from having their identity recognised:

- ◇ Names were changed to aliases in the transcripts, but in this thesis, participants have been referred to in groups and as their case numbers;

- ◇ An effort was made to avoid mentioning the name of the school;
- ◇ As for the OCP platforms, the data were limited to explanations, and the use of images of students was avoided.

d) The disclosure of findings:

- ◇ All participants asked to see the finished research, including the British Council, who were informed about this research because of the researcher's request to use the eTwinning platform.

e) The respect for context and sociocultural differences:

- ◇ The problem of who, when and where to interview participants was significant. This was overcome by interviewing students who had finished their OCP activity early and during the EFL hour of lessons;
- ◇ The language was the main obstacle to this research because the participants were not L1 speakers of English. For this reason, words were carefully chosen for written communication and questionnaires. In the case of interviews, the participant was always given the choice of which language they preferred to use.

3) Sampling strategy. This theme highlighted the need for participants to be fully aware of the research and their right to refuse to participate. Therefore, at the beginning of the initial study, a presentation was made to show the participants (students, parents and teachers) in order to display the objectives of the research and what to expect. Information leaflets were

also distributed to interested participants that were individual to each group: teachers, parents of minors and students. This material was later modified for use in the main study.

4) The theme concerning data methods emphasised two main areas:

a) *The interruption of lessons*: An effort was made not to invade teachers' free time by conducting interviews with workplace colleagues during their free periods at school and by asking online partners for written interviews so they could take their time and answer when it suited them;

b) *How the researcher elicits information*: Material rewards were not used because participants might have felt obliged to give positive answers. However, gadgets will be given to all of the classes, which helped in this research at the end of this study.

5) The recording of information:

- ◇ Google Forms and Docs were used for questionnaires (see Appendices B.2.; B.3.; B.4.);
- ◇ Interviews were recorded (audio) using the researcher's smartphone and transformed into transcripts as soon as possible so the conversation would still be easy for the researcher to remember;
- ◇ Participants attending schools in other cities and countries were asked to use English for their open-question questionnaires. However, all participants attending the same school as the researcher were given the choice of English or Italian for

their interviews. Interviews in Italian were translated into English and transcribed the same day (see Appendix B.1.). The results were as follows:

- All but one interview with C1S chose to use English;
- All interviews with C2S were in Italian;
- Two of the three EFL teachers from C4T chose English for their interviews, while the third preferred Italian.

6) All data were considered sensitive and private; therefore, maximum attention was given to data storage. Recordings, transcripts and questionnaire results were stored in the researcher's iCloud and personal computer that is encrypted with a unique password and never left the researcher's house, so there was little risk of them being lost or stolen.

Finally, in addition to the above list of ethical precautions, measures were taken to be honest with participants and the research audience. Care was taken to keep all promises made. Examples of the material mentioned above can be seen in Appendix C.

3.8.1. Reflexivity

Although research needs to be rigorously checked for bias, it also needs to be reflected upon, and decisions need to be made. However, understanding happens within the world and not outside of it (Burgess et al., 2006); therefore, researchers need to be conscious of their beliefs and communicate them to their readers. On the other hand, the very nature of AR is reflective because of the insider quality of the researcher who is part of the social world under investigation 'be it reflection-in-action, reflection on-action, or critical reflection' (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p. 329). The collaborative stance of AR

also increases the quality and trustworthiness of findings (Burns, 1999). In addition to the reflexive nature of AR, MCS data analysis maximises reflexivity while, at the same time, incorporating a varied range of perspectives on activities and issues as possible. It also facilitates the disclosure of contradictions and competing values, which assist in understanding the item studied (Stake, 2006). The five distinct perspectives of the cases in this study provide specific values of each situation. However, it is important to point out that using MCS is not to generalise or replicate but to observe various viewpoints and defend findings with accurate and generous descriptions.

As far as interviews are concerned, the researcher was careful to take reflexive precautions such as 1) Interviewing students in small groups to avoid an imbalance in power relationships and thus influencing the beliefs and opinions. Students feel less threatened in small groups when it is their teacher who is interviewing them because individually, they might say what they think their teacher wants to hear rather than what they believe to be true (McAteer, 2014); 2) Making an effort to encourage students to give an honest answer instead of coercing them (Williams and Brydon-Miller, 2004). For this reason, the researcher was conscious of using language carefully, checking that facial expressions and gestures were always encouraging and did not show surprise or disappointment; 3) Being constantly aware when analysing data that participants' answers are filtered through the analyst's interpretation of them, especially the ones that need translating. In fact, extra care was taken in interviews because of differences in language and culture (Brydon-Miller, and Maguire, 2009).

3.9. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present and discuss the methodology on which this study was built. It clarified the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions and

justified using qualitative investigation and AR as the most appropriate methodology for answering the research questions in this enquiry. The rationale for ‘insider’ research as a valid means of study rather than just a system of professional development was defended while also debating the practitioner's role as an academic researcher. Furthermore, prevalent procedures of AR were outlined drawing from Altrichter et al. (2002) and Burns’ (1999) AR framework. The initial and main studies were briefly presented in three AR cycles, and a description of the modifications made during the study was provided. Next, the use of an MCS design frame was explained, and the name OCPCluster justified and illustrated. Finally, the choice of a thematic approach to data analysis was defended as a suitable method for this study because of its flexibility and applicability to AR methodology. The chapter ended by describing the necessary ethical precautions and the measures taken to avoid bias and promote reflexivity and trustworthiness. This chapter has set the background for Chapter four, which presents the process of analysing and reflects upon the dataset regarding the research questions.

Chapter 4: Data and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes how data relating to this study were collected, analysed and presented. The completed dataset comprised sixteen face-to-face interviews, twenty-one emails, and sixty-six online open-question questionnaires collected from Italian and secondary-school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from other schools and countries and their students during the initial and main phases of the study. The data were used to explore EFL and Online Community Projects (OCPs) perceptions in secondary school education from varied perspectives.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section presents an in-depth description of the data-gathering process by describing each of the five cases and all the data-collecting events relating to each case. The second section describes how the gathered data were analysed using a five-phase data analysis procedure proposed by Burns (1999) to simplify and organise the coding of the large quantity of qualitative data. In addition, the study draws upon Clarke's (2011; 2016) approach to thematic analysis to explain how important themes were identified as they developed from the codes. The conclusion briefly summarises the data analysis and sets the groundwork for reporting the findings of this study in Chapter five.

4.2. Gathering data

As explained in chapter three of this thesis, data were gathered using a Multiple Case Study (MCS) called OCPCluster. This name was given to emphasise both the single identity that made up the MCS and unified the design frame and research questions. This

was important because, unlike a traditional case study made up of single cases, each of the five cases making up the OCPCluster was composed of between three and fifty-seven people, all living in differing contexts and settings but linked together by three factors; OCPs, EFL and secondary schools. A description of each of the five cases making up the OCPCluster was given in chapter three. A further summary of the data collected over the two years of data collection is given below to set the scene for describing the data analysis. Datasets are described in the order they were collected and then assigned the case names (C1S, C2S and so on). They are also given a reference title when documenting quotes in chapters four and five (see Table five Section 3.6.). The letter at the end of each case name indicates whether the data relates to a student (S) or teacher (T) group. Appendix A.5. gives a detailed description of the cases and references, while Appendices A.1. and A.2. show other tables used in recording data collection, and Appendix B provides examples of each kind of data.

4.2.1. Case-one students

Case-one students (C1S) was made up of students from two of the researcher's classes who were attending the Liceo Linguistico (specialising in MFLs) and who were motivated to learn EFL. The researcher spoke about the study during EFL lessons with the classes in question and asked if they would be interested in volunteering their help. All students offered to take part, and in order not to hurt feelings, data were collected in face-to-face interviews from randomly selected students from both classes. Nevertheless, all students in the two classes were given an information leaflet and provided the researcher with a signed consent and assent form.

The first class participated in two interviews: one was undertaken in the initial study when this class was in year eleven, and the other one took place a year later when they were in year twelve. The second class were only involved in the main study and were in year eleven during the whole period (see Appendix F.4. for age equivalents of secondary school students in the UK, Italy and the United States). The first class wanted to carry out both of their interviews in Italian, while the second class preferred to use English. When interviews were performed in Italian, they were transcribed directly into English by the researcher. This was possible because the researcher is fluent in both languages and could interpret meanings in the given context due to sociocultural knowledge and background. This approach was chosen because the presentation order of first and second languages (L2s) does not significantly differ from the resulting record of the interview or the final transcript (Isokoski and Linden, 2004). All interviews with C1S were recorded using the researcher's smartphone.

4.2.1.1. Dataset from Case-one students

1. C1S, Group Interview 1, 30/11/2017.

The group taking part in this face-to-face interview was made up of five year-eleven students, one boy and four girls, and was carried out in Italian. On this occasion, the researcher had a free hour, and the class teacher was absent. The substitute teacher allowed these five students to join the researcher for the interview, which was done in the caretaker's closet for lack of space. For this reason, the interview was interrupted numerous times. Nevertheless, data collected from this interview was rich and valuable, and planning for subsequent interviews included finding more appropriate environments.

2. C1S, Group Interview 2, 06/02/2019.

This face-to-face interview was performed in English during an EFL lesson dedicated to OCP activities. It comprised two year-eleven students, a boy and a girl, chosen because they had finished their OCP activities before the rest of the class. The interview, recorded on the researcher's telephone, was held in the Information Technology (IT) laboratory while the rest of the class worked in pairs on the computers. This was because the researcher could not leave the class unattended. In fact, due to the collaborative nature of OCP activities, there was a good deal of background noise, but there were no interruptions, and the recording was clear. In order to check that the interview was valid and understandable, it was transcribed the same afternoon.

3. C1S, Individual Interview 3, 14/2/2019.

This was a face-to-face interview with just one year-eleven girl, done when she finished her OCP activity early. It was also executed in English and recorded on the researcher's smartphone in the same way and for the same reasons as *C1S, Group Interview 2, 06/02/2019*.

4. C1S, Group Interview 4, 20/02/2019.

This group discussion took place between five year-eleven students on their own, without the researcher. For this interview, students who had finished certain OCP activities in the IT laboratory were given the researcher's phone to make a recording and stayed in the classroom under an assistance's surveillance. At the same time, the rest of the class went to the IT laboratory with the researcher. The recording was made in English but was of little

use. Students explained that they were worried about the quality of their English and answers. So they edited out any material that was given spontaneously, resulting in a unrealistic and controlled recording. The data were transcribed and added to the database, but it was of little use to this study.

5. C1S, Group Interview 5, 18/02/2019.

This was a face-to-face interview in English with three year-eleven girls following the same circumstances as interview *C1S, Group Interview 2, 06/02/2019*.

6. C1S, Group Interview 6, 03/04/2019.

Interview six was a face-to-face interview in English with four year-eleven students, one boy and three girls, following the same circumstances as *C1S, Group Interview 2, 06/02/2019*.

7. C1S, Group Interview 7, 13/05/2019.

This interview was face-to-face in English with four year-eleven students, two boys and two girls, following the same circumstances as previous interviews;

8. C1S, Group Interview 8, 27/05/2019.

Interview eight was a face-to-face interview in Italian with eight year-twelve girls. This interview was done with students from the same year eleven class as the one in the initial study, here they were in year twelve. Four of the participating students were the same as those who had participated in *C1S, Group Interview 1, 30/11/2017*. On this occasion, the

rest of the class were on a school trip, and these girls were left behind. They had already been given a consent and assent form at the beginning of the main study. However, as in the initial study, these students felt uncomfortable having themselves recorded in English, so the interview was done in Italian and translated directly into English during transcription in the same afternoon.

9. C1S, emails, 27/03/2019.

This data set came from twenty-one emails written by a year-eleven class, two boys and one girl, who described their views on the impact of OCPs. They were asked to write an email to a Norwegian friend explaining as honestly as possible about their OCP experiences. They were given five questions as a guide. This activity was given to the whole class to do in the IT laboratory on computers and (see example in Appendix B.5.). Nineteen students from this group had also participated in face-to-face interviews

4.2.2. Case-two students

Case-two students (C2S) was also made up of students from the researcher's classes but who were attending the Liceo Economico Sociale and did not specialise in MFLs. Therefore, these students were likely to have been less well motivated to study EFL than C1S and more representative of Italian secondary school students living in the area. This case was initiated during the main study when creating the OCPCluster and was not included in the initial study. In the same way as for C1S, the researcher explained the study during the EFL lessons, and C2S was also eager to be involved. For this reason, data for this case came from face-to-face interviews with small groups of students randomly selected from two classes: one in year ten and one in year thirteen. Both classes included

numerous students with learning disabilities and Special Learning Needs (SEN), and for this reason, it was not possible to conduct interviews while others were working on OCPs. Therefore, interviews were done in the classroom when others were on school trips or busy with other activities and when the researcher was free. All interviews with C2S were recorded with the researcher's smartphone in Italian and translated and transcribed the same day. The researcher translated and transcribing directly into English from the Italian recording. Data from this case were collected in the main study.

4.2.2.1. Dataset from Case-two students

1. C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019.

This face-to-face interview was held in Italian with three year-eleven girls. One of these girls was repeating year-eleven for the third time mainly because of unsatisfactory grades and behaviour issues. This interview was done during the researcher's free time and a period when the class had a supply teacher who permitted them to leave the classroom with the researcher

2. C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019.

The second face-to-face interview was also held in Italian but with six year-thirteen girls. There were many absentees due to a school-wide protest, so the hour was used for the interview. There were two students with SEN in this session: one girl with severe cognitive impairment and one boy with learning difficulties and dyslexia. There was also one student with learning difficulties who had had to repeat a year in the past.

3. C2S, Group-Interview 3, 13/ 05/2019.

This interview was face-to-face and in Italian with eight year-eleven students; three boys and five girls. One girl was identified as having SEN and learning difficulties. This interview was done during the class's EFL lesson when many students were absent because they were busy doing school-related activities.

4. C2S, Group-Interview 4, 22/05/2019.

This face-to-face interview was carried out in Italian with eight year-twelve students; two boys and six girls. One of the girls and one of the boys had learning difficulties, and both were considered to have SEN. Another student had had to repeat the year. Again, the rest of the class were absent due to school-related activities.

4.2.3. Case-three students

The group named Case-three students (C3S) was also new to the main study. It was made up of secondary-school EFL students from C5T's classes in other cities and countries. In contrast to C1S and C2S, the researcher did not approach C3S directly, but instead, she contacted their teachers, C5T, and asked them to share the link with their students and explain the research to them. In addition, the Google form had a section where the research was explained and a tick box where the student could give their consent for their answers to be used for research and publication or not (see Section C.3.). Data from this case came from fifty-seven students who answered an open-question questionnaire using Google forms.

4.2.3.1. Dataset from Case-three students

1. C3S, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019.

Fifty-seven students from other schools and countries aged between fourteen to eighteen answered the three questions in the open-question questionnaire. As C3S were students from C5T's classes, they were also from various cities and countries, including Norway, Sweden and Italy. This questionnaire was part of the main study and the third AR cycle.

4.2.4. Case-four teachers

Case-four teachers (C4T) was another new case to the main study. It totalled three EFL teachers who were not using OCPs at the time of the study but agreed to participate in one-to-one, face-to-face interviews with the researcher. The researcher explained the study, gave each teacher an information leaflet, and asked them to sign the consent form. While all three teachers worked at the same school as the researcher, two were employed as EFL teachers and the other one as a SEN expert. At the time of this study, the SEN teacher was working with a boy with severe cognitive impairment in one of the C2S's classes and helped him with the OCP activities. This teacher was chosen to participate in this study because, as an experienced Cambridge assessment examiner and an EFL teacher in private schools, her understanding of teaching EFL was deemed to be comparable to other EFL teachers in the school. However, she had had little experience teaching EFL in state secondary-school settings. Altogether (not counting the SEN expert), there were three full-time EFL teachers at this school at the time of the study, including the researcher. Only the researcher was using OCPs at the time of the study. Interviews from C4T were part of the main study and were recorded with the researcher's smartphone.

4.2.4.1. Dataset from Case-four teachers

1. C4T, Individual-Interview 1, 17/05/2019.

This individual face-to-face interview was with an EFL teacher with five years' EFL experience in secondary schools. This teacher had had experience with OCPs in the past but had chosen not to include them in the curriculum at the time of the study. This interview was held in English.

2. C4T, Individual-Interview 2, 10/06/2019.

Data from this individual face-to-face interview came from an EFL teacher with little experience in secondary schools but thirty years in private language schools and as a Cambridge examiner. This teacher was employed as a SEN teacher at the school where the researcher was teaching at the time of the main study. The only experience that she had had with OCPs was in the company of the researcher. The interview was done in English because this teacher was a first language (L1) speaker from Canada.

3. C4T, Individual-Interview 3, 11/06/2019.

This individual face-to-face interview was with an EFL teacher who had had eighteen years of EFL experience in local Italian secondary schools at the time of the study. This teacher had had experience with Erasmus plus projects and, for this reason, had had some experience with OCPs in the past. However, she had never actively organised one herself. This interview was conducted in Italian.

4.2.5. Case-five teachers

Data from Case-five teachers (C5T) were gathered from five individual open-question questionnaires (including one from the researcher), five anonymous online open-question questionnaires and one individual face-to-face interview. The difference between

individual and anonymous questionnaires was that the former was individually designed for the participant and used Google docs. At the same time, the latter was posted on the private area on the eTwinning OCPs Google forms, of whom only five answered anonymously. All but one C5T were EFL teachers from other schools and countries and OCP users (C5T, Individual-Interview 3, 14/11/2018) and were collaborating in OCPs with the researcher at the time of the study. Data from C5T made up both the initial study and the main one, and the face-to-face interview was recorded with the researcher's smartphone in Italian and transcribed and translated into English the same day.

4.2.5.1. Dataset from Case-five teachers

1. C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 1, 05/2018.

This online open-question questionnaire was in English and was part of the initial study. It used Google forms, had ten questions and was given to an experienced Polish EFL secondary-school teacher and Varkey Global-Prize finalist. This teacher had had many years of secondary school experience in Norway and was an expert in OCPs and global education. This teacher and the researcher were in regular contact using email, WhatsApp, Loomio, eTwinning and Teams.

2. C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 2, 2018.

This individual online open-question questionnaire was part of the initial study and asked twelve questions in English. It was given to an experienced Swedish EFL secondary-school teacher with many years of experience teaching in secondary schools in Sweden. This teacher and the researcher were in regular contact with each other by email, Loomio

and eTwinning. This teacher had just finished writing a thesis on global education and eTwinning.

3. C5T, Individual-Interview 3, 2018.

This data came from an individual face-to-face interview in Italian with an Italian EFL secondary-school teacher with just two years of experience as a supply teacher in a vocational school situated in a disadvantaged rural area. This teacher is the only one who was not doing OCPs with the researcher at the time of the study. However, she was doing an OCP that she had chosen to motivate her students and contacted the researcher for help with the eTwinning platform. This interview was part of the initial study.

4. C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire, 4, 05/2019.

Data collected from this questionnaire was from the researcher who had had thirty years' EFL experience in various secondary schools in the south of Italy at the time of the study. At the time of the study, the researcher had had eleven years' experience with OCPs, using various platforms and techniques. This questionnaire asked six questions.

5. C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019.

This anonymous online open-question questionnaire included four questions. It was answered by five EFL secondary-school teachers residing and teaching in various schools from other cities and countries, all with varying careers and experiences in teaching. They were approached by the researcher, who posted a private message on the teachers' private section on the home pages of the two OCPs on eTwinning. It explained the research and

provided the link to both the teachers' and students' open-question questionnaires. This message could reach a wide number of teachers because more than one hundred teachers had access to the sites, but not all of them were regular users and might not have seen the message. The questionnaires were anonymous, so the researcher did not know who they were or where they came from, only that they were willing to collaborate in the AR and were working on the same OCPs as the researcher with their classes. These questionnaires were answered during the main study.

6. C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 5, 06/2019.

There was a second individual online open-question questionnaire in English completed by the same Polish EFL secondary-school teacher teaching in Norway as in the initial study, but this one was undertaken for the main study. This teacher and the researcher were in regular contact using various communication tools. This questionnaire asked six questions.

7. C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 6, 06/2019.

This individual online open-question questionnaire in English was completed by an Italian EFL secondary-school teacher who had had just a few years of experience as a supply teacher teaching EFL in secondary schools in the north of Italy. This teacher was in regular contact with the researcher through WhatsApp, email and eTwinning after having met online through the eTwinning website. This interview was undertaken as part of the main study and asked six questions.

4.3. Process of data analysis

Cresswell (2003) describes data analysis as a spiral process with its coils becoming smaller and smaller as the data is filtered into understandable themes. In relation to AR, it involves describing what is happening in the workplace and why it is happening to ‘bring more informed applications of classroom practice into play’ (Burns, 1999, p. 153). Data collection and analysis is a reflexive process in AR, and as far as this study is concerned, it was active and evolving with new questions and new themes emerging throughout. This enquiry ended due to the time constraints of delivering this thesis and not because the seam of potential avenues of research had been exhausted. Thematic analysis was used to organise the qualitative data collected from the OCPCluster and determine and explore issues, relationships, differences and inconsistencies. This was done by reading the data many times in order to inductively locate themes that answer the research question (Allen, 2018). This is necessary because qualitative data refers to information in words and not numbers, making it much more difficult to organise than quantitative data. As Guest (2018) explains, analysis is not a linear process, so attention was given to a list of linguistic pointers when searching for themes, such as:

- 1) Concept repetition;
- 2) Local expressions;
- 3) Metaphors and analogies;
- 4) Shifts from topic and content;
- 5) Similarities and differences;
- 6) Linguistic signposting to indicate thought processes;
- 7) The absence of an expected theme (adapted from Guest et al., 2018, p. 20).

In addition, a five-stage framework adapted from Burns (1999, p. 157-160) was followed in order to ensure a data-centred outcome (see Appendix E.3.). The first phase involved assembling the collected data in preparation for the following stages of coding and analysis using a qualitative data analysis software package called Quirkos (see Section 4.3.1.). The

second phase was to produce codes from the data, with the aid of Quirkos, in order to create codebooks (Cresswell, 2003). Thirdly, data were compared across cases by merging data from each of them in order to search for similarities and differences in themes across the varied perspectives represented in the OCPCluster. Titles were allotted to each code to identify emerging themes (see Appendix D.4.). The fourth phase was where the themes were reviewed; interpretations were made by scrutinising the emerging results and being open to modifying or adding themes while, at the same time, being as reflexive as possible. The fifth and last stage was where themes were defined and named. Individual examples were chosen from the data to strengthen, highlight and validate findings emerging from the composite data. All stages prioritised writing short sentences referred to as memos, not only to help in remembering important ideas and understandings but also to apprehend developing thematic concepts (Clarke, 2011; Cresswell, 2003). Finally, throughout all the above-listed stages, reflexive thinking was continuous in order to give a good outcome.

4.3.1. Phase one: Assembling data

The first phase involved assembling the data collected throughout research and uploading it onto Quirkos. Many researchers still use paper, pen, highlighters, scissors and sticky tape to do their analysis (Guest et al., 2018), believing data analysis to be a messy three-dimensional process that cannot convert to the two-dimensional view available on a computer screen (Breckenridge, 2014). Likewise, the software is not an adequate substitute for the observation and reflection skills individual to each researcher (Bauer and Gaskell, 2019). However, in the case of this study, using an effective software tool to record and organise data into codes and themes provided a valuable supplement to the researcher's own reflective and analytical skills.

After experimenting with different qualitative data analysis software, the Quirkos package was chosen because it was straightforward to use. Quirkos was designed for people learning to use QDAS and was intended to be easy to learn to use compared to the more extensive packages such as NVivo, MAXDA and Dedoose, all of which were tried by the researcher. In fact, an advantage of Quirkos is that inexperienced researchers can use it to learn the essential skill of coding and then they can move on to other more complex software should they feel they need it. Additionally, it supports the QDPX extension, so data can be transferred to other more powerful software if more intricate features or multimedia need to be incorporated (Paulus and Lester, 2021).

Quirkos codes are labelled using colours, so they can be referenced and classified visually. A list of the codes and colours can be accessed to the right of the screen, so categories are easy to identify, refine or create by revealing overlapping codes, clusters and/or hierarchies. These features are helpful in organising iterative and complex coding systems so that the user can understand their data more efficiently (Saldana, 2021). Notes and memos can be added to the codes, and there is a search option for synonyms within data. Moreover, results can be downloaded as a summary, as memos or as a complete codebook. However, Quirkos has various limitations. For example, it can only handle limited amounts of data; it cannot access multimedia or be used with quantitative or statistical data, and it does not support team or group work among researchers (Turner, n.d.). Nevertheless, the researcher felt that Quirkos offered the best solution for this study. Although Quirkos is basic, it is also reliable. It facilitated the organisation of data and the development of codes and themes, giving the researcher time to concentrate on the data itself. This first phase in data analysis involved the following stages:

- 1) Transcribing and translating the interviews carried out in Italian;

- 2) Downloading the data recorded from the online questionnaires, checking the authorisations and discarding the one that did not give permission to use for research and publication, and transferring them into readable files;
- 3) Preparing notes and other materials.

Throughout the analysis process that lasted from the end of data collection in June 2019 until July 2020, the researcher tried to remain open to change and be as flexible as possible because the analysis is not a linear process (Guest et al., 2018). Moreover, as with all qualitative research, this enquiry is inductive and discovery-oriented, assuming that nothing in the social world can be foreseen because human beings are unpredictable (Rudestam and Newton, 2000). In fact, in addition to the various alterations put into place during the data-collection stage, for example, the addition of C2S, C3S and C4T, the three Research Sub-Questions (RSQs) were modified, and a fourth RSQ was added. Initially, the researcher had envisaged that the answers to the main research question could be found in RSQs one, two and three. Still, during analysis, the need for an additional question arose in order to separate the teachers' perceptions from the students' ones. As Clarke and Braun (2016) point out, modifying the research questions is sometimes necessary during the analysis stage, and this was true in this study. Although this thesis illustrates the updated research questions, evidence of older versions can be seen in Appendix D of this thesis.

4.3.2. Phase two: Coding data

The second step of data analysis is where data is coded and organised into comprehensible segments that can be easily found and assembled into more significant sections or themes. Codes are assigned, in the form of words or phrases, to make it easier for the researcher to organise and understand (Cresswell, 2003). Stuckey (2015) suggests searching for the data

storyline by reading the data enough times to become familiar with it while at the same time concentrating on the main research question. This is because coding should be based on what the researcher hopes to transmit with the study. However, not all codes need to fit within the storyline, and at this early point in the analysis, it is essential to keep an open mind and expect that further along in the process, other codes might emerge depending upon the direction which the storyline of the research takes. This is because qualitative data analysis is both structured and creative at the same time. It is an iterative process that breaks data into manageable pieces that will serve later on in phase four: *Making Interpretations*, and phase five: *Reporting Outcomes* (see Section 4.3.4. and 4.3.5.), when the data is reconstructed to tell the story of the research. This study uses the narratives of students and teachers making up the OCPCluster to guide the coding construction.

Wolcott (1994) suggests that in the case of large amounts of qualitative data, researchers should ‘keep breaking down the elements until they are small enough units to invite rudimentary analysis, then begin to build the analysis up from there [...] until you have a segment of data small enough that you finally see a way to begin’ (Wolcott, 1994, p. 30). This process can be considered coding and is the process used to begin analysis in this study. In order to be as impartial as possible, each case was individually coded while rereading the assembled texts and repeating the process until the codes seemed satisfactory to the researcher. The vast amount of data encouraged the counting of codes and quotes. However, as Cresswell (2003, p. 194) points out, although it can be helpful to initially count how often codes appear in datasets, many researchers feel uncomfortable doing this, and the same was true for this study. In fact, although codes were counted in this second

phase of analysis, which was undertaken in July and August of 2019, the numbers only served as a means of recognition and not as a measure of quality. This was because specific codes were mentioned frequently because some of the cases had many people in them and because particular codes were common to more than one case. This factor is explained in more detail in phase four (Section 4.3.4.).

The main difficulties encountered in the coding phase of analysis were due mainly to the inexperience of the researcher and the overwhelming amount of data produced. At first, much time was wasted because each of the five cases making up the OCPCluster was coded separately rather than as one body of data. Codes were allocated to each case while rereading the assembled texts, and this process was repeated for other instances where sometimes additional codes were assigned. At the end of this initial coding, all the cases were merged and produced a total of one thousand and seventeen quotes and sixty-one codes that were repetitive, confusing and inaccurate (see Appendix D.12.). Therefore, it was necessary to divide the five cases back into separate cases once again in order to compare the data (see Section 4.3.3.). These codes were then resolved into twenty-two frequently occurring ones (see Appendix D.4.). This time-consuming process could have been avoided if all the data had been coded simultaneously as a single OCPCluster, and then divided into separate cases as was necessary for the subsequent phases of analysis.

4.3.3. Phase three: Comparing data

After initial categorising was done in phase two, phase three consisted of revising and assembling codes into groups to eliminate the many recurring codes and search for patterns and affiliations within the dataset. At this point, it was necessary to reread all the data and

write memos. Memos were made following Clarke's (2011a) Situated Analysis approach from the very start of the analysis identifies differences in viewpoints. First of all, the initial codes from phase two of this study were grouped into themes which were then applied to the RSQs as shown in Table six:

Table 6: Transformation from codes to themes

<u>Phase-two codes</u>	<u>Phase-three themes</u>	<u>Quotes</u>
<i>RSQ 1 (and RSQ.4): How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?</i>		
1. Grammar vs Natural; 2. Language skills; 3. Global-language learning; 4. EFL skills; 5. How students were motivated; 6. No textbooks; 7. Easier vs difficult.	<i>Learning EFL</i>	232
8. How students feel they learn language best; 9. Discussion on group work;	<i>Descriptions</i>	135
10. Initial fears; 11. Time issues; 12. People not working; 13. Connection / materials; 14. Difficulties.	<i>Difficulties</i>	88
15. Groups and sociocultural factors; 16. Enjoyable / happy / fun.	<i>Communities</i>	32
17. Real-life situations; 18. Positive identity.	<i>Other important factors</i>	28
<i>RSQ 2 (and RSQ.4): How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?</i>		
19. How teachers were motivated; 20. Self-confidence.	<i>Professional development</i>	23
<i>RSQ 3 (and RSQ.4): Have teachers and students encountered any difficulties and drawbacks while using OCPs? If so, what were they?</i>		
21. Validity of OCPs; 22. Novelty.	<i>Difficulties</i>	69
Extra themes not directly in response to the research questions		
Codes from Learning EFL	<i>History / How students felt that they had learnt English (at the time of the study)</i>	40
Codes from Presumptions	<i>OCPs-Different kinds of OCPs</i>	11
Total Quotes		658

Initial data shows how the first RSQ elicited five initial themes: 1) *Learning EFL*; 2) *Descriptions*; 3) *Difficulties*; 4) *Communities*; and 5) *Other important factors*. On the other hand, RSQs two and three only produced one theme: *Professional development* and *Presumptions*. These results showed an unbalanced bias towards students' perceptions; therefore, a fourth RSQ was created to further refine and distribute the codes to answer the main research question in a way that better-represented teacher perspectives: *How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum?* There were also themes that seemed important but then were discarded because they were irrelevant to the study's research questions, for example, *History* and *Different kinds of OCPs*. Nevertheless, some of the quotes from these themes were important, and others suggested areas of further study.

At this point, data and codes were further analysed, modified and compared for developing themes and patterns (Burns, 1999), as well as similarities and differences, until six individual themes were identified: 1) *Language and Communication Skills*; 2) *Motivation*; 3) *Learning communities*; 4) *Professional Development*; 5) *Difficulties*; 6) *Theoretical Perspectives*. These themes were then examined across cases to identify similarities and differences. Table seven shows how this was done by using a tick-box method to quickly identify in which cases evidence for codes and themes could be found. These themes are discussed in detail and illustrated with excerpts in Chapter five, which makes up phase five of Burns's (1999) analysis framework.

An initial cross-case analysis showed both disparities and consistencies across perspectives. However, there were some aspects of learning EFL with OCPs in secondary school environments where all five cases felt the same. Firstly, all cases agreed that students' language and communication skills had improved in vocabulary, fluency and

listening and comprehension. They all felt that students were motivated by authentic communication with peers and that the most significant difficulty was time. In fact, 'time' was the only one of fifteen codes generated from the theme of *Difficulties* produced by all five cases. However, each case regarded it differently. These themes and codes are expanded and discussed in detail in Chapter five.

Stake (2006) points out how most case-study researchers prefer cross-case analysis, which means that investigators look for similarities across their research rather than looking for differences. As far as MCS is concerned, the 'complex meanings of the [OCPCluster] are understood differently and better because of the particular activity and contexts of each Case' (Stake, 2006, p. 41). Therefore, three fundamental polarities regarding themes were individualised and inspected across cases. Table eight presents the dualities found among and within cases and defines them as follows: 1) Learning EFL on OCPs; 2) Teaching approach; and 3) The value of OCPs. C1S were eclectic in their views and supported most viewpoints except that learning EFL on OCPs was difficult. On the other hand, C2S favoured lessons where they were free to work creatively, at their own pace and with their friends in such a way that they could help each other. For this reason, they found OCPs to be useful learning tools. Likewise, C3S appreciated the relaxed learner-centred approaches but were also critical of some OCP activities.

Table 7: Cross-case analysis.

Aspect	C1S	C2S	C3S	C4T	C5T
Language and Communication skills					
No improvement in EFL skills			✓		
Grammar	✓		✓		
Marks/assessment		✓			
Vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reading /Writing	✓	✓	✓		✓
Listening /Comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fluency/speaking/ autonomy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
General improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self-confidence				✓	✓
Global skills				✓	✓
Useful					✓
Motivation					
Interesting, worthwhile topics	✓	✓	✓		
Increase in self-confidence	✓	✓	✓		
Authentic communication in EFL with peers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enjoyable, motivating activities	✓	✓	✓		✓
The future		✓	✓		
Curiosity	✓		✓		
To be successful and autonomous EFL users	✓				
Working in groups		✓			
Working independently and at own pace		✓			
Positive EFL learner identity				✓	✓
Seeing their work published on the OCP platform					✓
Learning Communities					
Communication	✓	✓	✓		
Collaboration	✓	✓	✓		
Self-confidence	✓	✓	✓		
Socialisation and inclusion	✓	✓	✓		
Professional development					
Learn from experienced colleagues				✓	✓
Soft skills and social skills				✓	✓
Digital skills				✓	✓
Motivation to improve					✓
Difficulties					
Time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Students wasting time	✓			✓	✓
Groupwork	✓		✓	✓	
Internet	✓		✓		✓
Anxiety			✓		
Understanding peers			✓		
Materials			✓		✓
Colleagues not working					✓
Extra work				✓	✓
Students' lack of skills				✓	
Lack of necessary IT skills				✓	
Overcoming difficulties	✓	✓			✓
No difficulties	✓	✓	✓		✓
Theoretical perspectives					
Social constructivism					✓
SCT					✓
Cognitive approach				✓	
Behaviourism				✓	

The teacher cases revealed contrasting observations on learning and teaching EFL, which influenced their opinions on using OCPs. C4T preferred a teacher-led cognitive approach and felt that using OCPs to learn EFL would be difficult for students who were beginning their studies in EFL and that they would waste time. In contrast, C5T participants believed OCPs to be useful learning tools and favoured learner-centred approaches but were open to cognitive and social constructivist pedagogical theory. C5T also thought that learning EFL on OCPs was easy while at the same time acknowledging that they had had some difficulties (see Appendix D.8.).

Table 8: Contrast table

Contrasting viewpoints within the OCPCluster					
Contrasting viewpoints	C1S	C2S	C3S	C4T	C5T
Learning EFL on OCPs					
Easy	✓	✓	✓		✓
Difficult	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching approach					
Learner-centred	✓	✓	✓		✓
Teacher-led	✓			✓	
The value of OCPs					
Useful learning tools	✓	✓	✓		✓
A waste of time	✓		✓	✓	

4.3.4. Phase four: Making Interpretations

The fourth phase in data analysis continued examination of the data but focused on choosing the best quotes to illustrate each theme. Therefore, the six themes identified in phase three of this study were listed using an adaptation of Cresswell's codebook (2003, p. 191) (Appendix D.2.) in order to aid the search for evidence:

1. *Language and communication skills* – evidence of EFL history and skills: speaking, listening, research, reading, writing, IT and global skills;
2. *Difficulties* - Any evidence of unsuccessful points and/or suggestions on how to overcome the unsuccessful points. Any evidence of concerns relating to teachers' perceptions of OCPs, such as with the curriculum, students, IT, language skills, class behaviour and /or losing control of the class. Difficulties can be separated into problems in EFL and challenges in using OCPs or both;
3. *Learning communities* - evidence of references to the community settings, such as classes and communities; meeting people, perceptions and descriptions; sociocultural factors; learning from each other;
4. *Motivation* - evidence of how students were motivated, such as overcoming self-consciousness; developing a positive EFL identity and encouraging EFL activities;
5. *Professional development* - evidence of how teachers had found integrating OCPs could help (or hinder) with their professional development;
6. *Theoretical perspectives* – evidence of how teachers perceived EFL teaching and learning. For example, learner-centred or teacher-led lessons

and how much weight should be given to grammar-focused studies or natural understanding.

This stage of the analysis showed how themes were not common to all cases or questions. However, this is to be expected in MCS due to the diverse nature of cases (Stake, 2006). C1S, C2S and C3S answered RSQ 1, and the three themes involved were: *Language and communication*; *Motivation* and *Learning communities*. RSQ 2 involved C4T and C5T and included just one theme: *Professional development*; RSQ 3 was answered by all cases under the theme of *Difficulties*. Lastly, RSQ 4 involved C4T and C5T and used only three themes: *Language and communication*; *Motivation* and *Theoretical perspectives* (see Appendices D.10. and D.11.). This stage of analysis prepared the context for phase five, which involved the reporting of outcomes.

4.3.5. Phase five: Reporting outcomes

Phase five of the analysis process was the final one, where the outcomes were reported and discussed. The products of this phase constitute Chapter five, which is the *Findings and Discussions* chapter of this thesis. In order to organise data for this stage, three tables were drawn up and refined: The first one was made at the beginning of the data analysis process and comprised a list of quotes chosen from the dataset. This list was modified as the analysis procedure evolved. The second table was a new codebook that applied a summarised list of the literature from the literature review section of this study to each of the seven themes. The third table was a codebook that provided a summary of the principal codes relating to these themes. These resources are very long, and so representative examples have been presented in the Appendices (see Appendices D.1.; D.2. and D.3.).

Initial results from the first four phases of data analysis set the stage for the final phase of data analysis, where the results and findings are presented under the six main themes (see Section 4.3.4.). All five cases responded to the first theme of *Language and communication skills*, but with different perspectives and answering additional sub-research questions. The same was true for the themes of *Motivation* and *Difficulties*. The theme entitled *Learning communities* was responded to by students while teachers' answers, although similar in theme, were listed under that of *Theoretical perspectives*. On the other hand, only teachers answered the theme of *Professional development*. These findings are supported with examples from across the dataset and related to the scholarly work discussed in the literature review. The final cross-case analysis for phase five of data analysis can be seen in Appendix D.13.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the steps taken in order to answer the research questions while defending the procedures chosen for data collection and analysis as suitable for the AR methodology and MCS design frame. First of all, the context was laid out by giving references to each of the data-collecting events in the study while describing the cases and the circumstances in detail. It has also justified the additions of C2S, C3S and C4T towards the end of the data collecting period as the best ones for the context and circumstances in which the study took place. Secondly, it has illustrated the inductive approach taken to the analysis by describing the emerging codes and themes rather than presenting a deductive approach that would support a hypothesis (Clarke and Braun, 2016). This was done by following a five-phase plan adapted from Burns (1999) that allowed for the flexibility necessary for AR studies while at the same time providing a framework on which to organise the analysis of large amounts of data.

Phase one illustrated the stages before beginning analysis. It also justified the use of Quirkos for checking and documenting the data while organising it into easily identifiable groups. Phase two showed the initial coding and the situation at the beginning of the analysis stage when there were still only three RSQs. Phase three applied the codes to themes and justified using a fourth RSQ to balance the data and avoid underrepresentation of teacher views. Themes and codes were further adjusted in order to answer the RSQs until six final themes were produced: 1) *Language and Communication Skills*; 2) *Difficulties*; 3) *Learning communities*; 4) *Motivation*; 5) *Professional Development* and 6) *Theoretical Perspectives*. At this point, themes were inspected across cases to search for similarities and disparities. Three polarities were found: 1) *Learning EFL on OCPs*; 2) *Teaching approach*; and 3) *The value of OCPs*.

These initial findings suggested significant differences between teacher cases and some variances among students. Finally, phase four documented the results from phase three by organising and applying them to the RSQs in preparation for the next and final stage of analysis (Phase five). Excerpts were chosen to illustrate findings and were discussed through the lens of the literature reviewed in Chapter two. This was where the outcomes of the data-analysis process were reported and discussed, making up Chapter five of this thesis.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This findings and discussions chapter builds upon the previous one by providing the final phase of Burns's (1999) data-analysis plan. It presents the key outcomes of the data analysed in Chapter four as fitting for an Action Research (AR) enquiry. Findings from all five cases making up the OCPCluster are reported thematically with each of the four research sub-questions (RSQs), and perceptions are discussed to draw reliable, unbiased results.

The six main themes identified in Chapter four were: 1) *Language and communication skills*, 2) *Motivation*, 3) *Learning communities*, 4) *Difficulties*, 5) *Theoretical Perspectives* and 6) *Professional Development*. These themes are illustrated with extracts from the dataset and discussed in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter two. Excerpts were chosen either because they represented an experience or perception or because they exemplified exceptions that raised further questions. However, it was impossible to include all coded quotes in this thesis, and other examples illustrating the themes can be found in the Appendices (see Appendix D). Finally, it is important to note that although each excerpt comes from separate individuals from within the case concerned, unless stated otherwise, each one was chosen to represent the overall feel of the matter in question. Each data-gathering episode is referenced with the name of the case, the date and details (see Sections 3.6. and 4.2.; Table four and Appendix A.5.).

This chapter is divided into eight sections:

- 1) This first section introduces the chapter and the main research question;
- 2) The second section explains the organisation of the Online Community Projects (OCPs) created for this study concerning the three AR cycles;
- 3) The third part reports the answers from Case-one students (C1S), Case-two students (C2S) and Case-three students (C3S) regarding RSQ 1. The results are organised under three themes: *Language and communication skills*; *Motivation and Learning communities*;
- 4) Section four analyses observations from Case-four teachers (C4T) and Case-five teachers' (C5T) in answer to RSQ 2 and reported under the theme called *Professional development*;
- 5) The fifth part of this chapter presents the excerpts of all five cases that made up the OCPCluster to answer RSQ 3. This RSQ is structured under the theme of *Difficulties*;
- 6) Section six responds to RSQ 4 and analyses examples from across C4T and C5T's dataset under three themes: *Language and communication skills*; *Motivation* and *Theoretical perspectives*;
- 7) Section seven discusses the results from the four RSQs and then addresses the main research question by summarising the key aspects that characterise the findings in preparation for Chapter six;
- 8) The last section concludes the chapter and prepares the ground for Chapter six, which ends this thesis.

5.1.2. Research Questions

The main research question for this study is: *How can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in secondary school settings?* The answer to this question is reached through an in-depth analysis of the four RSQs presented in the following sections. The importance of these outcomes is discussed with existing knowledge in the theory of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Online Community Projects (OCPs). This study argues that these results build upon and expand previous understandings of students and teachers' perceptions on learning and teaching EFL in secondary school settings.

5.2. Online Community Projects and Action Research

This section illustrates the outcomes from the seven OCPs used as the basis of this study.

They were active among the three AR cycles as follows (see Table nine):

- Cycle One: The Initial Study: four OCPs;
- Cycle Two: The Main Study: four OCPs;
- Cycle Three: The Final Stage: Five OCPs.

The three AR cycles were each divided into four stages and presented following Altrichter et al.'s (2002) four-phase reiterating AR spiral framework (see Appendix E.4.):

1. Plans (or Revised plans);
2. Actions;
3. Observations;
4. Reflections.

Five aspects of the OCPs were considered under each of the AR phases (see Appendix D.15.):

- a. The date in chronological order;
- b. The OCPs in question;
- c. The action;
- d. The cases and people involved regarding the final OCP Cluster;
- e. The settings.

Table 9: The seven OCPs and three AR cycles

Number	<i>OCP 1</i>	<i>OCP 2</i>	<i>OCP 3</i>	<i>OCP 4</i>	<i>OCP 5</i>	<i>OCP 6</i>	<i>OCP 7</i>
OCP Title	<i>Be the Change Take the Challenge</i>	<i>Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning</i>	<i>SOS, Water Sources are Alarming</i>	<i>Take Stereotyping out of Your Lives</i>	<i>Be the Change Take the Challenge 1819</i>	<i>Teach to Learn</i>	Solar 7.0
AR Cycle	Cycle One: The Initial Study						
			Cycle Two: The Main Study				
	Cycle Three: The Final Stage						

This section will refer to the OCPs numerically, as presented in Table nine above to facilitate comprehension. It is to be noted that this study focused on the parts of the OCPs hosted on the eTwinning platform to provide consistency to the results, even though other media were used alongside the eTwinning one. Additionally, although the focus was on the learner and not the learning contexts, information about the OCPs was significant to the research question. Finally, examining the OCPs within the AR framework has highlighted other areas to study regarding OCPs in EFL secondary school education (see Section 6.5.).

5.2.1. Cycle One: The Initial Study

Cycle one of this enquiry consisted of the initial study that lasted from March 2017 to April 2018 and included four OCPs. Two of these OCPs lasted one academic year, and two lasted for two years (see Section 3.5.2.). C1S and C5T provided data relating to all four OCPs (see Section 3.5.1.)

5.2.1.1. Planning

The steps taken during the planning process for the initial study consisted of OCP initiation. Initiation varied according to the OCP in question and is described below in chronological order:

1) March 2017:

- The application for the two Erasmus plus projects, *SOS, Water Sources are Alarming* (Fearn and Hessová, 2019) (OCP 3) and *Take Stereotyping out of Your Lives* (Fearn and Salkauskiene, 2019) (OCP 4) was made through the national agency L'Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa (INDIRE), and partners were found through a local agency;
- *Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning* (Fearn, 2018) (OCP 2) was initiated for 2017/2018 by the researcher with a Special Education Needs (SEN) teacher at the same school. This OCP was created as a means of strengthening a

Programma Operativo Nazionale 2014-2020 (PON) Ministero dell'Istruzione
(2016) application for travel funds.⁵

2) July 2017 to September 2017:

- *Be the Change Take the Challenge* (Zielonka and Fearn, 2018) (*OCP 1*) was planned by twenty-two teachers from other cities and countries working together previously on OCPs met regularly using a decision making media called Loomio.org to decide on a topic and title. Next, this OCP was advertised to teachers in Italy and other countries using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and specialised teaching sites such as eTwinning, TES, Edmodo and others. The aim was to involve as many teachers as possible and from a wide range of locations, so there would be a broader opportunity for synchronous communication experiences among classes;
- The two Erasmus plus OCPs (*OCP 3* and *OCP 4*) were set up during face-to-face meetings in the Czech Republic and Lithuania. Neither of the Erasmus plus OCPs was advertised to other teachers outside of the schools involved in the Erasmus plus projects.

⁵ The researcher's school had made an application to obtain travel funds for fifteen students to potentialize their knowledge on the EU and citizenship from the Programma Operativo Nazionale 2014-2020 (PON) Ministero dell'Istruzione (2016) and so this content OCP was created to strengthen the application. The application was successful and won funds for fifteen students to spend three weeks learning English in Cambridge, UK.

5.2.1.2. Actions

Table ten presents the *Actions* phase of *Cycle One: The Initial Study* in a table format to facilitate comprehension. It follows a chronological order, describing the actions that took place and the people involved in the four active OCPs during this first AR cycle that lasted from September 2017 until June 2018.

Table 10: The Action phase for Cycle One: The Initial Study

Date	Action	OCP 1	OCP 2	OCP 3	OCP 4
				Erasmus+ projects	
September 2017 to June 2018	Activities and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions (September to October);• Four assignments (November to April: each activity was given precise dates);• Final products;• Project evaluation.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three transnational meetings where at least four students and two teachers were involved in each one (November 2017, April and May 2018);• Little activity took place on the OCP after initiation.	
	Data Collection	Mixed data were collected in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likert-style surveys sent to C1S and C5T using Google forms posted on Twinspace and Loomio.org• Qualitative data were collected from one face-to-face group interview with C1S, one teacher from C5T,		Likert-style surveys were sent to C1S.	

		<p>and two open-question questionnaires using Google docs with C5T.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two evaluation surveys were posted on each OCP platform, one to student-members and the other to teacher-members. 	
May to June 2018	Closing OCPs	<p>The final products were produced by the researcher and other active OCP teachers from C5T to summarise the OCP and the work done by the students throughout the year. They took the form of videos, eBooks and presentations, using various software, such as Prezi, Animoto, Issuu and so on.</p>	These OCPs were not closed.

5.2.1.3. Observations

During summer 2018, the researcher analysed data from the initial study using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). This methodology explicitly focused on the OCPs and what was happening within the OCP context. It was observed that:

- OCP 1* had considerable amounts of work uploaded onto the eTwinning OCP platform and significant evidence of communication and collaboration among teachers and students in EFL. Synchronous communication had been carried out using Skype, Google Hangouts and other software, while asynchronous

communication had been done using a variety of tools such as Padlet, eTwinning live chat and forums, Google packages, Flipgrid, video, Voki and so on;

- *OCP 2* also had substantial work uploaded onto the eTwinning OCP and considerable evidence of communication and collaboration using EFL (see Appendix D.15.). Synchronous and asynchronous communication was carried out in the same way as with *OCP 1*;
- The two Erasmus plus OCPs (*OCP 3* and *OCP 4*) showed little evidence of activity or communication on either platform, despite the considerable amount of work done during the transnational meetings.

5.2.1.4. Reflections

The end of the first cycle of this AR, and the writing up of the initial study, motivated the following reflections:

- All the OCPs in the initial study were content-based, so the researcher decided to create an OCP that focused on language for the next AR cycle;
- Although the eTwinning platform proved to be the most popular and successful platform for hosting OCPs (see Sections 2.2.1. and 2.3.), other media and software were also used. This choice was made because eTwinning was only available to teachers living in the European Union and neighbouring countries, whereas teachers could use other platforms outside of Europe.

5.2.2. Cycle Two: The Main Study

The second AR cycle of this enquiry marked the beginning of the main study and lasted from August 2018 to April 2019. It incorporated various modifications, including a transformation in methodology and research framework and the addition of a new case, C3S (see Section 3.3.3.). The initiation of two new OCPs, including the two Erasmus plus OCPs still running, meant four OCPs and three cases were active in this second AR cycle (see Section 3.5.2.).

5.2.2.1. Revised Plans

Several modifications to the research paradigm were necessary to obtain an answer to the research question. Therefore, plans were made as follows and listed in chronological order:

1) September 2018:

- *Be the Change Take the Challenge 1819* (Zielonka and Fearn, 2019) (OCP 5) was set up and advertised to other teachers using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and specialised teaching sites such as eTwinning, TES and Edmodo, to attract a wide number of teachers and thus offer a greater possibility for synchronous communication in EFL;
- *Teach to Learn* (Fearn, 2019) (OCP 6) was initiated to create an OCP that focused on language rather than content, and it was advertised on the eTwinning website;

5.2.2.2. Actions

Table eleven presents the *Actions* phase for the second cycle of this AR in the same way as it was done in *Cycle One: The Initial Study* (see Section 5.2.1.2). It presents the main actions from September 2018 until April 2019 regarding the four OCPs active and the people involved.

Table 11: The Action phase for Cycle Two: The Main Study

Date	Action	OCP 3	OCP 4	OCP 5	OCP 6
		Erasmus+ projects			
September 2018 to April 2019	Activities and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two transnational meetings where at least four students and two teachers were involved in each one (October 2018 and April 2019);		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introductions (September to October);Four assignments (November to April: each activity was given precise dates);Final products;Project evaluation.	
September 2018:	Data Collection			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two online open-question questionnaires were created using Google Forms: one for teachers collaborating on OCPs and living in other cities and countries, and another for their students;The researcher checked with her partner about the research and asked for approval to post the link to both	

			<p>the teachers' and students' open-question questionnaires on Twinspace;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval was given, and the link to the open-question questionnaires was distributed via the private area for teachers; <p>Teachers gave their students the link to the students' anonymous open-question questionnaires.</p>
November 2018:			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C3S and C5T were given anonymous open-question questionnaires;
From February 2019		C1S were interviewed in small groups and provided data from twenty-one emails (see Section 4.2. for a full description of data collection).	

5.2.2.3. Observations

Data were collected successfully from C1S, C3S and C5T, but a satisfactory answer to the research question was not evident (see Section 3.3.3.). The observations made from March to April 2019, in each OCP during *Cycle Two: The Main Study*, are listed as follows:

- OCP 5* was active and gave rich evidence of communication and collaboration among partners. However, there was not as much activity as the same OCP done

the previous year, and few of the sixty-seven teachers and their five hundred and eighty students were working actively on this OCP;

- *OCP 6* showed considerable evidence of communication and collaboration among partners;
- There was still no evidence of activity on *OCP 3* and *OCP 4*.

5.2.2.4. Reflections

Reflections on the OCPs in the second cycle and the main study were as follows:

- *OCP 5* was active over various platforms, such as WordPress, Facebook and Twitter, but the most dynamic platform was the eTwinning one (see Appendix D.15.). This eTwinning OCP showed substantial evidence of synchronous and asynchronous communication and collaboration in EFL, but this was provided by just a few of the large number of teachers initially registered. This result could reflect that many teachers in Italy and other countries would like to use OCPs, but cannot for reasons unknown to the researcher (see Section 2.2.1.);
- *OCP 6* focused on language rather than content as with the other OCPs in this study but still showed plenty of activity and evidence of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration and communication in EFL. This result might have been due to the social constructivist activities and the learner-centred teaching approach necessary when using OCPs, as suggested by Mutekwe (2014) (see Section 2.2.2.). In addition, although fewer teachers were registered to this OCP, it was still very

active, suggesting that it might not be necessary to have a large number of teachers involved;

- The two Erasmus plus OCPs (*OCP 3* and *OCP 4*) were still not being used.

However, communication and collaboration were very successful during the transnational meetings, when students and their teachers met in one of the partner's countries and stayed there for seven days. This outcome might suggest that OCP organisers did not have time to organise transnational travel and OCP activities.

However, only the researcher was involved from C5T, so further study is needed to understand this phenomenon fully.

5.2.3. Cycle Three: The Final Stage

Cycle three lasted from April 2019 to September 2019, during which time, the following actions took place:

1) April 2019:

- *Solar 7.0* (Šojat and Jukić, 2019) (*OCP 7*) was added to the four OCPs already active in *Cycle Two: The Main Study*.

2) From May to June 2018:

- The five OCPs active during the main study were completed and closed;
- Data were collected from all cases, and analysis began.

5.2.3.1. Revised plan

In addition to the methodological changes made in this AR (see Section 3.3.3.), a final OCP, *OCP 7*, was added to the study (see Section 3.5.2.).

5.2.3.2. Action

Table twelve shows the *Actions* phase for this third AR cycle, in the same way as *Cycle One: The Initial Study* (Section 5.2.1.2.) and (Section 5.2.2.2.). It is presented in chronological order from April 2019 until September 2019 and deals with all actions regarding the five OCPs active in this AR cycle and the people involved. It consisted of closing OCPs, collecting data, and ending as the writing-up stages of the AR study began.

Table 12 The Action phase for Cycle Three: The Final Stage:

Date	Action	OCP 3	OCP 4	OCP 5	OCP 6	OCP 7
		Erasmus+ projects				
April to June 2019	Data collection	The researcher provided data as a C5T participant in the form of an individual open-questionnaire.		Data were collected from <ul style="list-style-type: none">C3S and C5T in the form of anonymous face-to-face questionnaires;C5T in the form of individual open-questionnaires;		Data were collected from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">C5T in the form of individual open-questionnaires;C2S in the form of face-to-face group interviews.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C2S in the form of face-to-face group interviews: • C4T individual face-to-face interviews (see Section 4.2.). 	
May to June 2019	Closing OCPs	The final transnational meetings were completed, and teacher-members began to organise the material posted on the eTwinning OCP.	<p>Two evaluation surveys were sent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one to all student OCP members including C1S, C2S and C3S; • to all teacher OCP members, including C5T. <p>This task was done by the researcher and the C5T teacher living in Norway as OCP administrators.</p> <p>Final products were produced by the researcher and other active OCP teachers</p>	<p>Although evaluation surveys were sent out, they were only answered by C2S and the researcher from C5T.</p> <p>The final products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 3D model of the solar system was created and hung in the entrance hall of the school where the researcher teaches; • Photos, videos and presentations were posted on the Twinspace; • Teachers and students from the

			from C5T to summarise the OCP and the work done by the students throughout the year. They took the form of videos, eBooks, and presentations using various collaborative software such as Sway, PowToons and so on.	school in Croatia did not post anything.
June to September 2019	Data Analysis	All data were analysed (see Section 4.3.).		
September 2019	Final stages	All teacher members organised and uploaded material produced by their students over the two-year duration of the Erasmus plus projects onto the eTwinning OCP platform;		
	Writing	The writing up stage of this thesis began.		

5.2.3.3. Observations

During the final cycle of the AR, the following observations were made:

- *OCP 5* showed considerable collaboration and communication among students and teachers living in Italy and other countries. However, few of the many teachers registered in September 2018 had given evidence of cooperation on the eTwinning OCP with their students. Synchronous communication in EFL was carried out using various software in the same way as the OCPs in *Cycle One - The Initial Study*. Data had been collected from C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T (all but C4T);
- *OCP 6* showed active communication and collaboration among the seven countries actively involved. Substantial evidence was discernible of synchronous and asynchronous communication and collaboration by using various tools as mentioned above. Data had been collected from C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T (all but C4T);
- *OCP 7* gave no evidence of communication or collaboration at all between the two schools. It only showed the work posted by the researcher's school on the eTwinning OCP platform;
- The two Erasmus plus OCPs gave no evidence of communication or collaboration among OCP members. However, a large amount of material created by the students was posted on the eTwinning OCPs by the teachers.

5.2.3.4. Reflections

The analysis of the seven OCPs in this three-cycle AR study showed that not all the OCPs had encouraged the same level of collaboration and communication in EFL. First of all, this section reflects upon the OCPs active in *Cycle Three: The Final Stages*, and then a conclusion is given that summarises the results of all seven OCPs and the three AR cycles:

- *OCP 5* involved almost two hundred teachers. However, only sixty-seven teachers were registered to eTwinning, and not all of these teachers were active. Although a great deal of collaboration and communication took place during this OCP, including synchronous and asynchronous communication among students and teachers, it did not prove to be as prolific as the previous year's OCP that had fewer teachers. This finding suggests that there is no need to have such large numbers of teachers working on an OCP, confirming what is indicated in the literature by García-Martínez and Gracia-Téllez (2018); Mont and Masats (2018); Sadler (2018) (see Section 2.3.). On the other hand, many teachers mean a more significant likelihood of finding partners available to connect in synchronous communication activities. This fact is important because inflexible timetables confine secondary school teachers;
- *OCP 6* focused upon language and not content. It had far fewer teachers and students than *Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819*. However, both OCPs showed strong evidence of collaboration and communication among peers and colleagues. Therefore, it would seem that the focus of the OCP does not determine its success;

- *OCP 7* was extremely popular with the C2S, who took part in it. However, collaboration only occurred within the school where the researcher was working and not with peers or colleagues from Croatia. Nevertheless, the fact that the students expected their work to be read by Croatian students was a source of motivation (see Section 5.3.2.2.), as was the interdisciplinarity of the two school subjects, Physics and English. The lack of collaboration and communication among schools might have been because of the difficulty of communicating in English among teachers who were not EFL teachers (Lyster, 2011) (see Section 2.4.1.), though further research is necessary to gain a clearer understanding. Data for this OCP was only provided by C2S and C5T, and the settings of this OCP was the classroom, the STEM laboratory and Twinspace. In addition, new digital tools were used, such as Sketchup and the 3D printer.
- The two Erasmus plus OCPs (*OCP 3* and *OCP 4*) provided evidence of activity in a large amount of material uploaded onto the eTwinning OCP in September 2018. Most communication in EFL was done during the transnational meetings when the participating students and their teachers were physically together and not through the OCP. These results suggest that a Community of Practice (CoP) might only have been generated when partners were together during the transnational meetings in face-to-face sociocultural practices (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and not online as with the other OCPs. This fact could be because Erasmus plus projects require substantial work and organisation, leaving little time to encourage collaboration on OCPs, requiring considerable extra time to organise (Mont and Masats, 2018;

Pennock-Speck and Clavel-Arroitia, 2018). As far as data is concerned, only C1S and C5T (the researcher) provided data relating to these OCPs.

In conclusion, this study has gathered and analysed data relating to seven OCPs: five lasting one year and two lasting two years, as illustrated in Table thirteen. Among these OCPs, four showed evidence of collaboration and communication in EFL among teachers and students from other schools and countries; three focused on the content while one focused on language. Two of these OCPs had many teachers and students, while two of them had far fewer. In contrast, three OCPs in this study showed no evidence of online collaboration and communication in EFL. However, two of these OCPs were made to support Erasmus plus projects. Groups of students and their teachers met each other regularly face to face, where they carried out all tasks and assignments using EFL as the vehicle language. Therefore, communication in EFL was taking place, but not online. The third OCP that did not show collaboration or communication across schools only had two schools registered. Had there been more schools and teachers registered, it might have been more successful. These results are summarised below:

1. OCPs can be settings for rich and varied collaboration and communication in EFL.
This result confirms the literature in Chapter two (see Sections 2.2.1.);
2. Priority was given to face-to-face meetings in the case of Erasmus plus projects, rather than online activities using OCPs;
3. OCPs can still be successful learning contexts without synchronous and asynchronous communication in EFL. However, further research focusing upon OCP activities and contexts would be necessary to understand these dynamics;

4. It is not necessary to have large numbers of teachers for an OCP to be successful, but the more teachers there are, the more likely it will be that teachers can find colleagues with whom to connect classes for synchronous communication sessions in EFL;
5. Although many teachers seem to want to connect their classes using OCPs, few collaborate in communicative activities. Further research would be necessary to understand why this is. The following section will begin answering the RSQs using thematic analysis (see Section 3.7.).

Table 13: OCP analysis

OCP	Theme	Collaboration and communication	Schools	Active teachers	Teachers	Students	Duration (Academic years)
<i>OCP 1</i>	Content	Yes			43	592	1
<i>OCP 2</i>	Content	Yes		6	14	61	1
<i>OCP 3</i>	Content	None	5		24	73	2
<i>OCP 4</i>	Content	None	5		9	6	2
<i>OCP 5</i>	Content	Yes			67	580	1
<i>OCP 6</i>	Language	Yes		7	16	182	1
<i>OCP 7</i>	Content	None	2	2	6	26	1

5.3. RSQ 1: Students' perceived improvements through OCPs

RSQ 1: How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?

The first RSQ aimed to determine how students felt that their EFL skills had improved through working on OCPs in their lessons. Themes were developed from a complex process of coding and cross-case analysis aided by codebooks (see Appendix D) and explained in detail in Chapter four (Sections 4.3.3. and 4.3.4.). Data providing answers to this first RSQ was obtained from C1S, C2S and C3S, and the three themes developed from the data were: *Language and communication skills*, *Motivation* and *Learning communities*. The qualitative research design provided the opportunity to investigate the perceptions and

perspectives of one-hundred and sixteen secondary-school students regarding the effect using OCPs in their EFL lessons had had on their language and communication skills. Findings revealed that all three student cases (C1S, C2S and C3S), except for one student, felt their language and communication skills had improved in some way. But areas of improvement were individual to each case depending upon their sociocultural backgrounds and explained in detail in the following sections.

5.3.1. Language and Communication Skills

The theme of *Language and communication skills* is central to this study, and it refers to the abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks in EFL. For example, the practice of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, communication and so on. Excerpts for this theme included any evidence of EFL learning, including students' past experiences and mentions of improvement in language skills such as speaking, listening, research, reading and writing. The most relevant literature is derived from pedagogical theory in EFL and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), such as Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) (Ortega, 2014; Scott, 2015; Wingate, 2016) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Ellis, 2003; Krashen, 2003) (see Section 2.3.1.). Also essential to this theme are scholarship on sociocultural and social constructivist approaches, such as that on CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991), mediation (Vygotsky, 2011 [1935]), and guided participation (Rogoff, 2003) (see Section 2.5.5.).

A cross-case comparison in Chapter four (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.) of the *Language and communication skills* showed that all three student cases, C1S, C2S and C3S, believed their language and communication skills in EFL had developed through using OCPs. However, there were some variations in perspectives regarding areas of improvement. The

most significant difference among cases was in the concept of grammar (cases C1S and C3S) and assessment (C2S). Only one student felt they had learnt no language or communication skills, and that student was in C3S.

5.3.1.1. Case-one students

C1S was made up of students who were attending the Liceo Linguistico and were motivated EFL students. Although all student cases confirmed that OCPs provided the possibility of developing language skills, students from C1S felt that grammar was central to learning EFL. When asked about how integrating OCPs in lessons could help them to learn English, the following quotation best represents the feelings of C1S:

'[Y]ou will lose many of your English grammar lessons, but it isn't completely correct, as I told you before you will make quiz or games using grammar, sure enough, you are going to learn this language in a different and funnier way than the traditional one. Therefore, [it] is not a waste of time.' (C1S, emails, 27/03/2019).

Although this excerpt and others show optimism about learning grammar through OCPs, it also conveys apprehension about missing their usual grammar-based lessons. Most C1S shared the cognitive viewpoint that learning EFL requires formal training in grammar structures before autonomous usage is possible:

'I think speaking is better because you can practice and obviously you can't do it if you don't know the grammar rules' (C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/02/2019).

Learning grammar is fundamental to C1S's concept of learning EFL. This fact is emphasised by the frequency with which the word 'grammar' appears in the C1S dataset (forty-eight times). However, despite grammar being fundamental to C1S, not all students showed uneasiness about losing their usual grammar lessons and some felt that their grammar had improved by using OCPs:

'It helps you to know grammar better, but these projects help us to put our knowledge into reality, so we really do practice with grammar, and it's helpful.'
(C1S, Group-Interview 3, 14/02/2019).

As *Teach to Learn* (one of the OCPs, from the main study) concentrated on grammar (see Section 5.2.2.), the question was raised of whether content-based OCPs would give the same results. However, in the initial study, the C1S who gave the following excerpt had only had the experience of content-based OCPs and when asked: 'What do you learn the most?' All five students making up the group answered that *'[They] learn the grammar most'*. When encouraged to explain their answer, they said:

'We read articles in English, so we see how texts are articulated, and it helps us and makes learning it easier' (C1S, Group-Interview 1, 30/11/2017).

OCPs are usually content-based learning tools functioning on a sociocultural, social constructivist approach to language learning, where knowledge is an active process of construction rather than passive learning of it. For this reason, it might be expected that the learning of grammar structures would not be suited to content-based OCPs projects, and so, the fact that most C1S students felt they had learnt grammar came as a surprise to the

researcher. Moreover, none of the promotional reports into eTwinning and International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) studied for this enquiry had suggested this finding. However, there were two factors highlighted in the literature review that would explain this phenomenon.

Firstly, Krashen (2003) explains that ‘when students are engaged in real problem solving and are exposed to interesting and comprehensible input, they acquire language and learn concepts and facts much more easily’ (Krashen, 2003, p. 85) than through formal grammar-focused didactics (see Section 2.4.5.). Cognitive theory is founded upon the belief that communication and usage of a second language (L2) or foreign language is an intuitive process, and corrective grammar functions are only used as an afterthought or to make corrections (Chomsky and Arnone, 2011). When trying to understand a text or a speech, learners are interested in ‘what was being said’ and not ‘how it was said’ (Krashen and Terrell, 1988, p. 19). Therefore, according to cognitive theory, students with prior knowledge of EFL will be able to reflect upon structures and learn from them, as confirmed by C1S.

Secondly, when teachers adopt learner-centred social constructivist approaches, students extract their own values and experiences in order to perform learning activities (Davydov and Markova, 1982), and motivated C1S students looked for and reflected upon how sentences in EFL were structured grammatically. Furthermore, authentic activities that resemble real life, such as those done on OCPs, are necessary to construct online CoPs (Gajek, 2018). CoPs are fostered by sociocultural theory (SCT) and promote learning as an integral part of students’ lives, helping them transform from being an apprentice or beginner to an expert in their learning (Lave and Wenger, 1999). The nature of knowledge is conceived as distinctive to each individual depending upon their sociocultural

background and will emerge through collaboration and experience (Townsend and Bates, 2006). By allowing each learner the freedom to access and interpret information, the possibility of focusing on the grammatical structure of sentences is left open and may well be the focus for some learners. This seemed to be the case for C1S students whose interpretations of EFL learning included how sentences were structured grammatically.

5.3.1.2. Case-two students

C2S perceived knowledge in the area of EFL differently from C2S because they had had dissimilar sociocultural backgrounds. The fundamental difference was in the acquisition of grammar structures that C2S found difficult and uninteresting. This was evident when C2S explained about their past EFL experience in the following excerpt:

'She used lots of grammar, and everything was all mixed together, and so it was too much, too many arguments altogether in each test. So, if I studied one argument, I couldn't do the others. But not just me, nearly all the class' (C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019).

This excerpt shows that in contrast to C1S, C2S rejected the formal teaching of grammar structures because of past learning experiences. Literature (for example, Hinkel, 2012) has shown the impact that EFL teachers might have upon some of their students when using a teacher-led method that considers the teaching of grammar important in learning EFL (Hinkel, 2012). From the above excerpt, we can surmise that this was the case for C2S because it confirms what Xiangui (2005) reports to be a feature of such approaches to language teaching: that language is broken down into small pieces of impractical language and that only linguistically correct answers are rewarded. The following example shows how this participant from C2S felt that the EFL teacher was indifferent to their difficulties:

'Instead, in my past, even in my junior school, I've never been happy in my English classes. I didn't have high marks. In fact, they were very low, but this depended on the teachers. I think they didn't care, and they didn't try to help me get higher marks, so I never was never happy for the teacher' (C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019).

C2S students had difficulty with this method and were given low marks, making them feel demotivated and unable to learn EFL. Additionally, teacher-led approaches, such as those experienced by C2S students, are described in the literature as perceiving teaching as a one-directional passing of knowledge from teacher to student (Hung, 2010). This method often results in the teacher speaking in class excessively and students becoming bored, as noted by the following comments from C2S:

'It's not boring. It was more difficult in the middle school. English was much more difficult. With this kind of approach, it's much easier. Time passes quickly, and you learn things without trying.' (C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019).

Furthermore, as mentioned in the literature review, teacher-led instruction regards all learners as having the same needs (Wenden, 2019), but students have mixed abilities in lower-secondary schools in Italy (INDIRE, 2014). For this reason, there would have been students from C1S and C2S in these classes together, plus many other students, resulting in the level having a wide range of learning needs. A possible consequence of using this method in lower-secondary school EFL classes is that students who are intrinsically motivated by performance goals learn to believe that studying grammar is the key to learning languages. At the same time, those who do not lose interest and motivation (see Section 2.4.5.1.). When asked why they believed other MFL teachers do not use OCPs, C2S explained that another MFL teacher in their secondary school:

'The [French foreign language] teacher said we are behind in the programme, so she wants to do tests and explain everything to us. She also probably thinks that we won't take it seriously. But I don't think it's like that [...]. In English, it's not like that. In English, we do well' (C2S, Group-Interview 3, 13/05/2019).

The above example suggests two possible reasons that the French teacher did not want to use OCPs in this C2S participant's opinion. One reason was that she was following an assessment-led curriculum that did not allow for variation. Another reason was that the teacher in question might not trust the students to take the OCP seriously. In contrast, C2S felt they worked well on OCPs during their English lessons when using OCPs. This suggests that C2S had begun to see themselves in a positive light regarding EFL, confirming what was said in several reports about how working on OCPs can help to nurture a positive EFL identity, for example, Kitade (2014) and Education for Change (2012).

As far as specific language and communication skills are concerned, C2S only mentioned vocabulary and fluency:

'You can learn new words, and it's a more pleasant way to learn [...]. It helps you to express yourself better';

'I think it's a beautiful activity because you don't do the usual lesson where the teacher explains, and we have to listen, and we have to concentrate on the book. Instead, it's something where we can work in groups with people. And because it's easy, we have positive marks, and it doesn't damage us at all. Whereas in class, well, you know what I mean.' (C2S, Group-Interview 3, 13/05/2019).

C2S measured their improvements in EFL language and communication skills by the positive marks they had been getting in EFL since using OCPs. The concept of rewarding correct language usage, and consequently, admonishing incorrect usage, comes from the influence of theory in behaviourism (Szecsy, 2008) and assessment-led curricula (see Section 2.5.1.). On the other hand, Nortcliffe (2012) explained that it is important that students receive supportive, learner-centred feedback from their teacher and peers because summative feedback helps them evaluate their learning. Therefore, the excerpt above indicates that the learner-centred OCP activities had encouraged C2S to consider their EFL learning. Finally, it is essential to remember that EFL is a core subject in Italian secondary schools, and C2S attended the Liceo Economico Sociale, which does not specialise in EFL. Therefore, some C2S might have been studying EFL because they had to, and not because they wanted to.

5.3.1.3. Case-three students

C3S was made up of fifty-seven students from C5T's classes and came from other schools and countries. They were involved in OCPs with C1S and C2S at the time of study and provided data anonymously by answering three open questions in an online open-question questionnaire. The following excerpt shows that this participant from C3S shared C1S's preference for learning grammar structures:

'They helped me to improve my vocabulary and grammar most. Because in order to do our project missions we use the dictionary most to learn unknown words. In writing activities, I looked for some grammar structures. They were all useful';

Another participant concentrated on their writing and speaking skills:

'Because of the project I've had to write several emails and do several projects which are all in English, making me a better writer. It has also helped my speaking abilities because of the couple of times we've talked face-to-face with the other groups';

The following example shows how OCP activities inspired this participant to try and understand their peers and learn new vocabulary:

'As everything written is in english (sic), I've need to try to understand people we were talking to through this, so I've searched for some new words in english (sic) with the aim of understanding those students better' C3S, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019.

These data confirm what was said by C1S and C2S, in that C3S felt they had improved their EFL skills in grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing and comprehension. However, none of the students in C3S or C1S spoke about grades. This could be explained by the wording of the open questions or that their work on the OCPs activities had not been evaluated as part of the yearly EFL assessment. Another crucial difference found in C3S, which was not found in other cases, was that one participant said: *'Honestly, I didn't learn a single thing'*. As C3S data were collected anonymously, this result could mean that C1S and C2S were giving positive answers regarding OCPs to please their teacher (Thomson and Gunter, 2011), despite the researcher having taken all the precautions described in Chapter three (see Section 3.7.1.), such as interviewing in small groups, avoiding coercive language and encouraging students to give honest answers. At the same time, motivation to please teachers or parents can be a positive dynamic, as explained by Wigfield et al. (2012) and expanded in the next section.

5.3.2. Motivation

This study has found that the motivating aspect of OCPs was fundamental to how students felt their language skills had improved. The literature review revealed that students need to be interested in the task ahead of them to be motivated intrinsically (Wigfield et al., 2012). For this reason, learners need to believe that what they are doing is worthwhile and so EFL learning activities and subject matter need to be authentic and significant to their everyday lives, as described in the literature (Scimeca et al., 2018; Wingate, 2016; Scott, 2015; Dooly and Sandler, 2013; Guarda, 2012; Van Lier, 2011; Townsend and Bates, 2006; Ellis, 2003). It is also important that the standard level of EFL lessons is suitable for the students involved (Ellis, 2003). Above all, it is essential to note that motivation is not the same for all contexts and depends upon sociocultural influences that are distinctive to any specific time and culture (McInerney et al., 2014).

Areas of motivation were initially identified in phase three of the data analysis (see Section 4.3.3.) and processed until the following key motivational features of learning EFL with OCPs were recognised: *Interesting, worthwhile topics; Increase in self-confidence; Authentic communication with peers* from other schools and countries; *Enjoyable OCP activities; Working with friends; The future; Curiosity; To be successful and autonomous EFL users* and *Working independently and at own pace*. A cross-case analysis in Chapter four (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.) showed that student cases: C1S, C2S and C3S, had four aspects in common: Firstly, the interesting topics that students felt to be worthwhile; secondly, an increase in self-confidence; thirdly, authentic communication with peers and lastly, enjoyable, motivating activities. Interestingly, only C2S found working in groups to be inspiring, and only C1S was motivated by curiosity and an aspiration to become independent EFL users (McInerney et al., 2014; Wigfield et al., 2012; Elliot, 1999).

5.3.2.1. Case-one students

C1S students were intrinsically motivated by topics that they felt to be important and worthwhile such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the human rights:

‘When you work about it, you really know which problems are important because if you have to find materials for your arguments for your speech, you have to know more things, not just what people say around you’ (C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/02/2019).

For this task, students did the research for authentic material, learnt new vocabulary and used more complex language structures so that they could report to their overseas peers, as indicated below:

‘You have to use your words in a clear way so people can understand what you say and understand what others wanted to say on the matter too’ (C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/02/2019).

Curiosity for the ‘big world’ outside the EFL classroom was also a motivating factor for C1S participants:

‘I believe that outside there is a very big world. I think these projects can help us could help us, and to have contact with the world’ (C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/02/2019)

Working on OCPs made a pleasant change to the usual EFL lessons and motivated students to work harder:

'There is a very big difference because in the traditional lessons most of us are very bored so if you do some projects you are inspired, and you want to do more because it's a fun way to learn the language' (C1S, Group-Interview 7, 13/05/2019).

These findings corroborate research by Dooly and Sandler (2013). They explain that textbooks are not attractive to EFL learners because they use simplified texts that focus upon the sociocultural interests and settings of first language (L1) English speakers and are often very different from EFL speakers. On the other hand, authentic activities using unsimplified texts and content intended for L1 English speakers will increase accurate vocabulary and discourse production (Nation and Webb, 2011). In addition, by opening the classroom to the broader world, C1S students, who felt they were skilful in EFL communication, recognised the advantages they had over some of their peers in their ability to communicate, as explained below:

'It is difficult, but we can communicate via chat. We already know the basic English structures, so it's easier in comparison to others' (C1S, Group-Interview 1, 30/11/2017).

This excerpt reveals that despite finding communication in EFL problematic, students from C1S overcame this difficulty by using text messaging, suggesting that C1S are intrinsically motivated to learn EFL because they feel it is important. In addition, they think they have a better level of English than other students, which reveals a degree of self-confidence. This finding supports Elliot (1999), who suggests that intrinsic motivation can be found in the aim to feel competent EFL users concerning peers or even surpass them in proficiency. In addition, C1S students claimed that their aptitude in EFL was due to their own initiatives

and not because of what they had learned at school. When asked for clarification, one student said they had learnt:

'at school about 30% and at home 70%.'

'I've learnt English on my own because it's one thing studying with a book and it's another thing watching a film or listening to music in English. In fact, I have spent a lot of time in an English group writing song lyrics, and I've learnt on my own.'

(C1S, Group-Interview 8, 27/05/2019).

These examples show that C1S are goal-motivated to learn EFL. Therefore, they have studied English outside of school before using OCPs, which means that they have been intrinsically motivated by social, cultural factors outside of school. Wigfield et al. (2012) suggest that this could be for several reasons, such as: 1) To please other people such as parents or teachers; 2) Because they know it is crucial for their futures; 3) To keep up with, or to impress their peers.

This notion also confirms Krashen, Nagy and Townsend's (2012) argument against 'relying on direct instruction for more than a small fraction of vocabulary development' (Krashen et al., 2012, p. 233). As discussed in the literature review (see Section.2.4.5.), a natural-approach curriculum consists of communicative goals based upon topics or activities because 'grammar will be effectively acquired if goals are communicative. Ironically, if goals are grammatical, some grammar will be learnt and very little acquired' (Krashen and Terrell, 1988, p. 21). Moreover, activities need to focus upon topics that are interesting and relevant to students, so they will be motivated to express their ideas, opinions, desires, emotions and feelings (Wingate, 2016; Ortega, 2014). On the other hand, formal grammar-focused language learning is necessary for tests and exams where learners

need to think about rules and not communication. For example, a C1S student of French as a foreign language explained how they had needed to go to private lessons to reach the level required by the teacher:

‘Personally, if I didn’t go to another teacher that helps me with French, I wouldn’t have learnt what I know, because I am just one person and our teacher can’t be there just for me. She has to teach the whole class, not just me.’ (C1S, Group-Interview 7, 13/05/2019).

The intrinsic motivation behind the extra French lessons was goal orientated. This C1S found that classroom learning was not sufficient, so they paid privately to do extra lessons. As confirmed in the literature, one of the most significant drawbacks of teacher-led classes is that students cannot get individualised support. In addition, standardised grammar-based examinations put pressure upon teachers to use material outside many students’ competence and irrelevant to their interests and needs (Gajek, 2018). The above C1S student had the advantage of parents who organised and paid for private lessons. Less fortunate students risk becoming discouraged and even develop subversive self-identities, affecting their future lives negatively (Norton, 2016). The literature review shows that teachers who promote communicative tasks that place fluency over accuracy believe that grammar forms will be assimilated similarly to L1s (Wingate, 2016). When activities pose a practical challenge and preparation is done in advance of the lesson, students can work independently and at their own pace (Ellis, 2003), while teachers are free to give individual help where needed. A C1S student commented on this:

‘Teachers don’t have to do anything; the students do it all by themselves.’ (C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/03/2019).

This participant from C1S felt empowered by the learning autonomy acquired while working on OCP activities because when students feel that they are working productively, they are learning in the best way possible (Scott, 2015). Finally, these excerpts show that C1S students are intrinsically motivated to learn EFL inside and outside the classroom.

5.3.2.2. Case-two students

In contrast to C1S, some students in C2S had had difficulties in their EFL lessons but found EFL easier when using OCPs and felt motivated to work and learn because of exciting topics and working in groups. In fact, in line with the social constructivist approach to learning, students received apposite support from peers and teachers. This resulted in increasing self-confidence and motivation to learn, as revealed in the following extract:

‘It’s not boring. English was much more difficult in the middle school. With this kind of approach, it is much easier, time passes quickly, and you learn things without trying.’ (C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019).

C2S was motivated by the fact they were learning EFL skills that they had believed were too difficult for them. One of the reasons that this was happening is that C2S felt the activities were meaningful and worthwhile. The following excerpt shows how C2S became so involved with the element they were researching that they began to identify themselves with it and appropriate it:

‘Apart from the fact that it was more interesting, we were inspired to look for information about our planet. The planet became our planet, and we were even

more interested in it for this reason. It was very inspiring' (C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019).

C2S found OCP activities more motivating than previous teacher-led lessons focused on textbooks that they found stressful and worthless. As explained in the literature review chapter, students are intrinsically motivated when they are interested in or enjoy what they are doing (Wigfield et al., 2012), as evident in the excerpt below:

'Teachers think that the lesson should still be based around the book and oral tests and I think that they are completely wrong because people can only concentrate for a short time. In these projects, we work harder, and it's a way to relax too. But we want to do it. Also, we work in groups, and one day when we work in a company, we need to be able to work in groups, and even in life we need to speak to each other, so we need to get on together. I think it's important' (C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019).

In addition, C2S students were aware that working in teams was a skill they would need in the future and that OCPs could aid their progress. In fact, among the essential elements of interest that emerged from C2S data was the social aspect where C2S had understood that they could learn from each other:

'it's also useful because when we work in groups, there's always a person who speaks better than what we do. We can help each other and so we can understand how to do it better' (C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019).

This example confirms that interest in something can be raised because it is done with friends (Wigfield et al., (2012). In addition, C2S felt encouraged by communicating with

peers from other schools and countries and were able to understand their skills by considering those of others:

‘that’s even more reason we should work harder. It’s a way of measuring yourself against other people’ (C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019).

C2S aimed at becoming as competent EFL users as their peers but did not mention comparing favourably to them. By ‘measuring’ their English skills against those of their peers from other schools and countries, they could evaluate their own abilities and those of their peers and recognise improvement (Nortcliffe, 2012). The following excerpt from a C2S student shows that participating in OCPs was also in line with social constructivist activities:

‘it’s very useful because you use your knowledge and skills in real-life situations in such a way that you can develop your skills from your knowledge’ (C2S, Group-Interview 4, 22/05/2019).

These findings confirm what was said in C1S about the motivational quality of authentic materials (Nation and Webb, 2011). They also suggest the potential for peer support and working on tasks and activities that the learner feels are essential. This can lead to independent learning and is central to SCT, which promotes the teaching of languages through collaborative activities (Kern and Warschauer, 2009).

5.3.2.3. Case-three students

Regarding motivation, C3S presents similar findings to those of C1S and C2S in most aspects. In the first instance, working on OCPs activities gave students the chance to use,

and therefore learn English in a more enjoyable and successful way, as described in the excerpt below:

‘OCPs are useful for our lessons. Thanks to them, our lessons became more enjoyable and effective.’;

Students were also motivated to speak in EFL by communicating with peers from other schools and countries in authentic situations. This helped them to feel more self-confident and motivated to learn more:

‘These projects help you to learn English because you need to be able to communicate with other students of other countries and, in order to do that, you have [to] know English’;

‘I’m less shy when i (sic) speaking English’

C3S was inspired to think about their future by participating in OCP activities in a similar way to C2S:

‘These projects are works that make us reflect about our future and how we can help to improve it’;

In the same way as C1S, C3S were also curious about their peers from other schools and countries;

With this (sic) projects we have learnt lots of interesting features and curiosities about many different countries, and we also learn much new vocabulary and got in contact with new people’ (C3S, Online Open-Question Survey, 06/2019).

C3S students found OCP activities to be intrinsically motivating in three ways: firstly because the activities were enjoyable and effective; secondly, because they felt more self-confident; and thirdly, because students were using the language to communicate with peers from other schools and countries through synchronised communication. Online learning tasks are perfect for authentic communication in English (Li, 2013). Real-life communication motivates students to improve EFL performance to communicate more effectively, as mentioned in Chapter two (see Section 2.4.5.1. (Wigfield et al., 2012).

5.3.3. Learning Communities

The final theme from the data concerning RSQ 1 is entitled *Learning Communities* and deals with the sociocultural aspects of learning EFL through using OCPs. The key points learnt from the literature review about this theme come from three primary sources: promotional literature on OCP platforms, social constructivist and SCT approaches and online communication. As far as the former is concerned, as noted in Chapter two (see Section 2.2.), there is a great deal of literature that focuses on the global and technological features of OCPs, but little that concentrates on EFL. A connection was found between MFLs and global skills by Mercer et al. (2019), who points out how the focus on communicative goals and interaction are central to global education. Likewise, according to SCT, EFL is an implicit mediational tool for constructing knowledge and negotiating shared meanings through communication and collaboration (Hung, 2010; Wertsch, 2007). In the literature review, this study considered OCPs a sociocultural tool for mediation whereby language acquisition could be encouraged by working on OCPs through socialisation, collaboration and communication with other people in collaborative OCP activities.

Corresponding to this theory, Lave and Wenger's (1991) study on Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) and CoPs describe learning as the transformation from being a beginner (In EFL) to becoming an expert through participation and social guidance while adjusting the teachers' role to one of organisation and guidance. This theme arose from four categories in the data: *Communication*; *Collaboration*; *Self-confidence*, and *Socialisation and inclusion*. It was defined by any evidence of location and context because sociocultural teaching approaches do not detach the learner from the context (Hung, 2010). The cross-case investigation illustrated in Chapter four (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.) revealed that these features were common to all three student cases.

5.3.3.1. Case-one students

Firstly, C1S explained that collaborating with peers from other schools and countries was a more natural and effective way of learning EFL:

'Because you don't learn languages, you learn them by talking to other people learning about the problems of society, work problems. I think it's more interesting and it's also more fun to do it than just grammar' (C1S, Group-Interview 2, 06/02/2019).

This excerpt shows that C1S recognised the benefits of learning EFL through socialising with other people living in other countries. Communication and collaboration are key to SCT and corroborates Lave and Wenger (1991), who say that knowledge is acquired rather than learnt through increased participation in a CoP. This student also compares this type of lesson favourably to learning grammar because it is more fun, raising the subject of how valuable enjoyable EFL lessons are. Wingate (2016) suggests that by making EFL lessons

fun, standards are lowered and will result in demoralised students. However, the following quote shows that this was not the case:

'Even if we are not native speakers, these projects will help you to familiarise with the language a lot because you will feel proud of yourself using new words that you learned with this project.' (C1S emails, 27/03/2019).

C1S students felt encouraged and more self-confident by the new vocabulary they had acquired. This fact verified what was said in the literature review about using original, unsimplified texts intended for L1 English speakers and contrasts with cognitive theory, whereby texts are modified to be understandable to a certain predefined level of EFL learners. In contrast, SCT claims that students learn by socialisation and collaboration (Allen, 2005), finding their own input suitable for their interests and learning. Therefore, socialisation and cooperation contribute to the cognisance of content vocabulary and the flourishing of all other areas of language (Nation and Webb, 2011). The following excerpt shows how the inclusive aspects of collaborative OCP activities could be beneficial because working on OCPs had helped this participant from C1S to socialise:

'You have fun with your mates, and you'll probably become better friends. I wouldn't have spoken to [xxx] or [xxx] if it hadn't been for this project' (C1S, Group-Interview 7, 27/03/2019).

This participant from C1S explains how the class became more united through working on an OCP and is consistent with findings from Kitade (2014) and Education for Change (2012) indicating that OCPs on eTwinning had contributed to improving students' self-esteem and identity and had resulted in better classroom relationships and motivation to do well. Moreover, Rogoff (2003) confirms the importance of the social community where

learning occurs, describing the process as *Guided Participation*. This learning process includes any kinds of experiences, undesirable and desirable, and depends upon the community's social values. SCT recognises that knowledge is constructed through socialisation and communication with other people in the community (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929]). Therefore, meanings and perspectives cannot be negotiated unless social inclusion is encouraged and students can work together in harmony.

In contrast, Helm (2013) argues that conflict is advantageous for EFL learning and can increase global understanding. That divergence needs to be addressed rather than just being acknowledged for change to happen (see Section 2.3.). Furthermore, as explained in Chapter two of this thesis (see Section 2.2.), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) promotes learning to live together as one of the main objectives in global education (Nikolitsa-Winter et al., 2019). However, expert mediation is necessary when young people from different sociocultural settings and backgrounds interact on discordant topics. It is doubtful that secondary school EFL teachers will have the training required to do that (Camilleri, 2016).

5.3.3.2. Case-two students

Data from C2S confirmed that the relaxed OCP environment meant students were able to help each other. This was especially useful for those who had difficulties in understanding their teachers or were afraid of letting them know when they had not understood something, as we can see in the following comments:

'Sometimes we feel scared to ask the teacher, especially if he's just explained something. How can we ask if we have not understood?';

'Yeah, with some teachers they get upset if we ask about something that they have just explained';

'Instead, if your friend has understood, she can quickly explain what you want to know' (C2S, Group-Interview 3, 13/05/2019).

These examples show how the relaxed learner-centred environment, created while working on OCP activities, had encouraged communication and socialisation among peers. This allowed students to help each other with any difficulties and is in accordance with learner-centred approaches relative to social constructivist theory. As discussed previously, C2S students had found learning difficult under a teacher-led policy founded upon the assumption that human beings learn from memory and experience rather than their own initiative (Buchanan, 2010). This kind of teacher-led method derives from behaviourism that rewards linguistic development with high marks or punishes slow progress with low ones (Xiangui, 2005). Students attending school in Italy risk having to repeat the school year unless they reach a good mark in several subjects (INDIRE, 2014). Three students in C2S had already repeated at least one year for this reason, and EFL was one of the subjects in question. Therefore, they were uncomfortable admitting to their teachers when they had not understood something. On the other hand, with a learner-centred approach, they were free to negotiate and construct understandings and meanings with the teacher on hand to supervise and guide learning activities (Allen, 2005).

Another interesting example to list under this theme was from a C2S student with severe cognitive impairment. This student was usually excluded from EFL lessons because they were considered too difficult for her kind of disability. However, she was included in the English OCP lessons and worked in groups with other students. Although she did not want

to take part in the interview due to her extreme lack of self-confidence, she intervened when the group was asked what they liked best about working on OCPs:

‘Working in groups! It’s nice, and it’s beautiful’ (C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019).

During the OCP lessons, this participant from C2S felt part of a community of students and shared the learning process and satisfaction of the group, despite her severe disability. This fact sustains Gilleran et al. (2017) who explain how their teachers can guide students to embrace diversity, develop shared values and encourage inclusion.

5.3.3.3. Case-three students

As with the previous themes, C3S confirmed most of what was said by C1S and C2S.

Firstly, they said their self-confidence to speak English was boosted through the learning community created on the OCP, as shown in the following excerpt:

‘We have to speak with another person and give us brave (sic) to speak, so it helped being open with my English’;

EFL was the medium necessary for communication within the community, and the OCP activities were the focus of socialisation and collaboration, as explained below:

‘This community is a way of exchanging ideas with people from other cultures and learning more ways to make a better world. For example, by the letters we wrote to students from other countries.’ (C3S, Online Open-Question Survey, 06/2019).

This quote clearly shows how C3S also felt that collaborating with peers from other schools and countries on OCPs had helped their communication skills, adding to previous confirmations that OCPs were acting as tools for explicit mediation. Explicit mediational

tools such as OCPs are motivating agents given to students in order to encourage communication (Wertsch, 2007). English was needed to speak about topics that C3S felt to be important, such as making ‘a better world’. This improved C3S’s self-confidence and strengthened both speaking and writing skills.

5.4. RSQ 2: Teachers’ perceived development

RSQ 2: *How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?*

This question was answered by teacher cases: C4T and C5T. The difference between these two cases was that C4T were EFL teachers working at the same school as the researcher and not using OCPs in their lessons at the time of the study. On the other hand, C5T were EFL teachers from different schools and countries who collaborated with the researcher on the OCPs and the AR research as participants who shared information with the researcher about workplaces and values (Mackay, 2016). Although C4T was not using OCPs, all three participants had had some experience: 1) The teacher from interview one had done two eTwinning OCPs in the past; 2) The teacher from interview two had never done an OCP but had helped a student with severe learning impairment do OCP activities; 3) The teacher from interview three had had experiences with the two Erasmus plus projects that were supported by the OCPs on the eTwinning platform.

This RSQ acknowledged just the one theme: *Professional development* and showed how both C4T and C5T felt that collaborating with colleagues through working on OCPs had had positive effects on their development as EFL teachers, but on different levels. Areas of progress were in intercultural-relationship skills, global awareness, Information Technology (IT) skills and teaching methods. C5T also said that working on OCPs

enriched their practice and felt motivated to experiment with new tools and approaches to improve their practice further.

5.4.1. Professional Development

The theme of *Professional development* was defined by any evidence of how teachers perceived that integrating OCPs into their curriculum had helped or hindered their professional development. Salient results from the literature review showed that using OCPs could be advantageous for teacher development because inexperienced teachers could expand and review their practices by engaging in ongoing activity in collaboration with more experienced professionals (Townsend and Bates, 2006). OCPs can also help combine theory with practice (Johnson, 2006) as well as expediting digital literacy and bringing new teaching ideas and tools for EFL (Gajek, 2018).

The four main features emerging from this theme and analysed across cases in Chapter four (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.) were: *Learning from experienced colleagues*; *Soft skills and social skills*; *Digital skills* and *Motivation to improve*. Both teacher cases felt they had developed professionally in the first three facets, but only C5T felt encouraged to improve their practice after using OCPs. In fact, C4T had chosen not to use OCPs despite the advantages they presented. Literature justifying the use of OCPs for professional development can be found in two main areas: firstly, in the literature concerning technology, global awareness and relationships, such as Bourn (2018); Kearney and Gras-Valázquez (2018); Germain-Rutherford (2015) (see Section 2.2.); and secondly, in scholarship regarding SCT and the assumptions behind collaborative learning and CoPs, for example, Ortega (2014); Young-Scholten et al. (2013); Wertsch (2007); Lave and Wenger (1991) (see Section 2.5.).

5.4.1.1. Case-four teachers

Data from C4T came from three individual face-to-face interviews with teachers who were not using OCPs at the time of the study. When asked about their perceptions on professional development, C4T explained how they had met teachers from other schools and countries and had learnt some interesting things about their cultures, as quoted below:

‘Yes, it was great for me because I had a chance to meet ‘virtually’ colleagues from other countries and to know something more about the Polish traditions or also the Turkish traditions as well. And so, it was great. It was a way to face the situation; it was quite challenging, quite daunting, it was a challenge for me because I didn’t realise that it’s not that simple to run a situation like this one [...]. I acquired some soft skills. For example, how to mediate in complicated situations. Probably that’s the most important one. How to mediate in different situations’ (C4T, Interview 1, 17/05/2019).

This participant from C4T had found collaborating on OCPs with teachers from other schools and countries challenging but was satisfied that they had developed *soft skills*, a term given to interpersonal skills such as communication and teamwork (Bourn, 2018), to deal with difficult situations. This participant from C4T felt that *soft skills* were the most important skills they had learnt through working on OCPs. These skills regard relationships and are linked to global skills, essential for facilitating understanding and familiarisation with other cultures (Bourn, 2018). As described in the literature review, Germain-Rutherford (2015) explains how the supportive atmosphere on OCPs can encourage intercultural and global awareness. Moreover, promotional reports claim that twenty-first-century teaching skills are evolving through OCP collaboration and concepts

are being modernised and disseminated (Kearney and Gras-Velázquez, 2018; Camilleri, 2016; Education for Change, 2012; Gajek and Poszytek, 2009).

The following example shows how this participant from C4T had noticed improvements in her digital skills and that teachers could learn from each other through working on OCPs:

‘Well, the actual use of the computer itself and then maybe putting into practice everything that goes on online. I also think you can learn from other people like when you did those games online’ (C4T, Interview 2, 10/06/2019).

Improvements in IT and applying technology to teaching methodologies in collaborating with colleagues from other schools and countries confirm what was said in the literature review concerning research by Gajek (2018) and Gulbay (2018).

Finally, C4T realised that they might not have even known there were alternative ways of working until they had seen other teachers’ approaches and vice versa. This point was considered a motivational value of OCPs:

‘It’s a way of growing also because you share your experience with your colleagues, both good and bad experiences. For example, I might think I’m doing something well, but then I see a colleague, and I can learn from them, or they can learn from me too’ (C4T, Interview 3, 11/06/2019).

This concept was developed in the literature review whereby Oleson and Hora (2013) point out that teachers sometimes assume that their students learn in the same way as they did. This belief will become stronger unless teachers can build upon experiences through

socialisation with other professionals in the field. The above quotation suggests that OCPs offer the chance for this to happen.

5.4.1.2. Case-five teachers

In contrast to C4T, C5T was using OCPs with the researcher at the time of the enquiry. The findings from C5T data showed the advantages of collaboration and learning from colleagues from other schools and countries, as noted by this participant from C5T below:

‘Collaborating with teachers from all over the world makes it easy to learn about new tools, strategies, approaches and methods. If it had not been for OCPs, my teaching practice would be poorer and less varied’ (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 5, 06/2019).

This excerpt shows how C5T appreciated the socialisation made possible through the OCPs. They shared tools, learned new teaching methods, gained knowledge, and felt that their practice had become richer because of collaboration with their OCP partners. In fact, as rationalised in the literature review chapter of this thesis, collaboration is an important aspect of professional development and involves cooperative learning, which has its roots in SCT and mediation. In fact, sociocultural learning is considered to be a combination of social interaction and cultural-historical processes (Wertsch, 2007) that constantly change as people learn and become independent users of knowledge (Ortega, 2014; Young-Scholten et al., 2013). Likewise, an OCP acts as a catalyst for creating CoPs, as teachers progress to see themselves as part of a group of successful, innovative teachers (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This is in accordance with what was happening among C5T teachers. One C5T teacher explains how the experience transformed them:

'I totally changed my point of view on students, methodologies, school ...everything! It was a shock. I had never used anything but some YouTube videos and probably my lessons were boring and standard. Now when I prepare a lesson, I continuously ask myself "Can I teach it differently?"' (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 6, 06/2019).

This participant from C5T said that working with OCPs helped them to construct better relationships with their students and school in general. This agrees with what was said in the literature review about how collaborating using OCPs can encourage teachers to experiment with new methods and improve self-confidence and self-identity (Crişan, 2013; Kitade, 2014). It is also important because research shows that unless teachers explore and experiment with new ideas, they will never become expert teachers (Tsui, 2011). However, C4T had chosen not to use OCPs despite the advantages explained above. The following section will examine the difficulties and drawbacks found by all cases in order to shed light on the matter.

5.5. RSQ 3: Difficulties and drawbacks

RSQ 3: *Have teachers and students encountered any difficulties and drawbacks while using OCPs? If so, what were they?* In order to find the answer to this RSQ, data from across all five cases in the OCPCluster were examined. Only one theme was necessary and was entitled *Difficulties*. As far as the research in literature was concerned, the promotional literature only gave insights into the advantages of OCPs, for example, Gilleran (2019) and Cassels et al. (2017). However, other studies revealed various issues that teachers had come across when using OCPs in their lessons. For example, many teachers lack time and skills, and schools have a shortage of technological resources and supportive staff

(Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Chigona, 2014;). Other problems were found in classroom management, such as Maduabuchi (2016) and Gouseti (2014), as discussed in Chapter two (see Section 2.3.2.).

5.5.1. Difficulties

Evidence examined for this theme comprised indications of unsuccessful points and suggestions on how to overcome them, including those regarding EFL, OCPs or both. This included any evidence of apprehensions relating to teachers' perceptions of how OCPs can be integrated into the curriculum, such as time issues and the inflexibility of the EFL curriculum. Student behaviour and the validity of OCPs in the EFL classroom was also a focus of this theme. The cross-case analysis for this theme was described in Chapter four (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.), delivered thirteen areas of difficulties and concerns: *Time and curriculum; Students/teachers wasting time; Groupwork; Internet; Anxiety; Understanding peers; Materials; Colleagues not working; Extra work; Students' lack of skills and Lack of necessary IT skills*. Two contrasting themes were; *Overcoming difficulties* and *No difficulties*. Only one of these aspects was common to all five cases, and that involved issues with time and curriculum and was mentioned by various participants in each case. Most participants from four of the five cases, except C4T, said they had found no difficulties. However, participants in all five OCPCluster cases had come across at least some problems, as shown in (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.

5.5.1.1. Case-one students

One of the most significant issues that C1S found was with the Internet connection and not having enough time to finish activities, as described in the quotes below:

'Internet might not work so well and available hours might not be enough to finish the projects at school' (C1S, emails, 27/03/2019).

As mentioned in the literature, not all secondary schools can provide adequate technology, and not all students own their own device. Other studies show that while the school might be equipped with technology and an internet connection, there is often inadequate technical support leading to equipment that does not function and a weak or absent Internet signal (Maduabuchi, 2016; Chigona, 2014; Maftoon and Shahini, 2012).

Other C1S found working in groups a problem because of lack of peer cooperation:

'When you work in groups, if there is somebody who doesn't work it's a problem';

'They not only spoil things for themselves but they spoil things for us too, so you have to work twice as hard, and sometimes you have to do work not just for yourself, but you have to do it for them too, and this way the project takes longer and sometimes never finishes' (C1S, Group-Interview 8, 27/05/2019).

The literature says that technology can promote collaboration by motivating students positively (Macaro et al., 2011). In contrast to C2S, who felt that the collaborative side of OCPs was their strength, C1S found working in groups to be a source of frustration. For example, the participant from C1S below preferred to work with people they like:

'Yeah, I suppose because it's better to work with people you get on with than with people you don't really like' (C1S, Group-Interview 2, 06/02/2019).

This is because all human beings work and learn at a unique pace and manner (Dooley, 2011). However, in classes or groups of students with different EFL abilities, some can

become excluded from groups of more academic peers. Although the cognitive approach emphasises communication, the focus remains upon the individual (Xiangui, 2005). In contrast, the social constructivist nature of OCP activities encourages a learning arena where learners and teachers can construct knowledge through collaborative activities and communication. For this reason, it is crucial that teachers design tasks that pose a practical challenge for their students in such a way that they can use EFL to build and expand their skills (Ellis, 2003).

Another reason that not all students are keen to collaborate in OCP activities could be inequalities in linguistic skills among partners. This study argues that it is important that students are of similar levels in EFL to avoid demotivating power issues between EFL speakers and result in a lack of interaction (Norton, 2010). When asked if it was important that partners were at the same level as themselves, C1S answered:

'It would be a bit because [otherwise] I would have to do everything, but I think it's important that I'm with him because he speaks English very well and he does what I tell him. I think it's also important to work with somebody who hasn't got a high level because you can teach them some things, many things if they are willing to learn. If they're not, well, I would have to do all the work on my own' (C1S, Group-Interview 2, 06/02/2019).

This C1S student had a very high English level and worked most of the time with another student (*him*), who had a similar story. The hypothesis is that unless the student with a lower level is highly motivated and willing to learn, the more able student will have to work for both parties. This fact contrasts with C2S, who found working in groups and

communities to be one of the most motivating aspects of OCPs and helped each other to overcome difficulties, as explained in the next section.

5.5.1.2. Case-two students

C2S enjoyed working in groups and collaborated successfully, helping each other to overcome any issues as evident below:

‘And yes, there were difficulties but by working in groups, together we helped each other to get over any difficulties, and it was a good way of improving and growing’ (C2S, Group-Interview 4, 22/05/2019).

Although difficulties were found, C2S helped each other to overcome them. Therefore, it would seem that C2S had formed a successful CoP, whereby students felt independent and part of the learning practice and would eventually result in an autonomous community (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Moreover, through working on OCPs, C2S recognised that EFL was not as complicated as they had previously thought. They found it more accessible than using technology:

‘For me, the most difficult thing was using the technology aspects rather than English, which was a great surprise, and I’d like to point that out’ (C2S, Group-Interview 4, 22/05/2019).

In addition, C2S overcame their initial fear of using technology, and it became a facilitator of EFL learning, as shown below:

‘With technology, I wasn’t very good, but I slowly learnt, instead with the language, I got better’ (C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019).

These quotes show that the most significant difficulty C2S had while doing OCPs was with the technology and the Internet connection, but they could develop their EFL skills anyway. Moreover, C2S found using EFL as a means of communication the lesser difficult of the two, confirming Gouseti's (2013; 2014) study that indicated students' command of technology was not as high as the teachers' expectations of it. They are passive consumers, not creators (Brennan, Monroy-Hernández, and Resnick, 2011).

Finally, and as far as the issue regarding the lack of time was concerned, one C2S said:

'I had problems making videos; it was difficult to add the writing and the words with pictures. It takes a lot of time' (C2S, Group-Interview 4, 22/05/2019).

However, this participant from C2S did not complain about the lack of time but pointed out that more time was needed to complete activities. The correct amount of time necessary to complete tasks depends on the student's intellectual development and material (Vygotsky, 2017 [1929]). Therefore, students need to work at their own pace, but this is often in conflict with EFL curricula, as reflected by the teacher cases later on in this chapter (see Section 5.5.1.5.).

5.5.1.3. Case-three students

While most of the participants in C3S said they had found '*no difficulties*', some of them pointed out complications that they had seen, such as working in groups, technology, understanding and making themselves understood in online synchronous communication and the feeling of self-consciousness. As with C2S, C3S found making videos an issue. However, instead of needing more time, C3S said that recording videos and speaking in EFL before they felt ready to do so made them feel anxious, as shown below:

'I had difficulty recording videos because of anxiety.'

'Sometimes I did not like it very much because I had to speak in English.'

Krashen and Terrell (1988) claim that the learner requires low-anxiety conditions and a degree of self-confidence for successful English language learning. Also, when lessons focus on the conscious learning of grammar without enough input, then communicative production will be sacrificed, and students will feel a sense of failure. Experts in SLA say that acquisition begins with a silent period because comprehension precedes production, which will not start until the student is ready. At first, spoken language is weak and simple, but it improves with time and after receiving significant practice and comprehensible input (Krashen and Terrell, 1988). Therefore, these students might not have been ready to speak in English, or it could be that they were just shy individuals. Understanding is interpreted differently to each individual, and the right balance and method for each group should emerge through collaboration and experience and within the learner's capacity (Townsend and Bates, 2006).

In addition to issues regarding self-consciousness and anxiety, some C3S students found difficulties with synchronous communication. The following excerpt indicates a lack of time that is mutual to all of the cases in the OCPCluster:

'Answering the questions with students from other countries has been the most difficult since we did not have time'.

Other complications were found with different accents, levels and Internet connections, as shown in the following excerpts:

'It was sometimes difficult to understand other people because we all have so different accents';

'Online chatting gone wrong sometimes, because of the internet (sic);

'Communication with the people who don't know English';

Stickler and Hampel (2015) claim that face-to-face methods cannot simply be reassigned to online environments, and difficulties regarding synchronous communication are to be expected in online contexts. This is because the lack of body signals, eye contact signalling of approval and disapproval, and so on can lead to insecurity and self-consciousness (Shetzer and Warschauer, 2009; Hampel, 2006). According to (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991), synchronous text-based communication is an excellent alternative, but C3S had problems with the Internet while trying to do that. In addition, synchronous communication requires time, and C3S found that there was not enough to communicate satisfactorily with their partners from other schools and countries via the Internet. A possible solution to these issues could be asynchronous communication, for example, email or video recordings that are also very useful for language learning (Kitade, 2014; Young-Scholten et al., 2013) and are well suited to OCPs.

A final issue that C3S had in common with C1S, but not with C2S, was working in groups:

'I think working in a group was the worst problem because I couldn't put sometimes my own ideas' (C3S, Online Open-Question Survey, 06/2019).

This participant from C3S found working in a group difficult because they could not make their voice heard. This is an interesting finding because while C1S had complained that some students in the group had not participated and so they had had to work harder to

compensate, C3S had found working in groups difficult because they could not work in the way they wanted. As Rogoff (2003) points out, students learn from their cultural communities. However, each social environment and activity will be understood differently (van der Veer, 2007). Therefore, some students will benefit from social interaction, and others will be compromised (Daniels (2007).

5.5.1.4. Case-four teachers

When asked why they were not using OCPs and what difficulties they found when using them, one of the reasons given by C4T was a lack of digital skills.

‘Maybe also because I wasn’t very good with technology. I had problems with IT, now I haven’t though, because I’ve understood how to use technology at home on my own, so I feel better about these things. Even with virtual classes, etcetera. At first, you think, oh dear, what if a kid asks me something and I don’t know what to do? Instead, now, I am ok. Perhaps it’s a question of being ready, with Internet and to evaluate many things’ (C4T, Individual-Interview 3, 11/06/2019).

This participant from C4T reveals a lack of self-confidence regarding the use of technology in EFL lessons. This insecurity confirms studies such as Akdemir (2017), Camilleri (2016), Maduabuchi (2016) and Gouseti, (2014; 2013), who found that technology was a cause for trepidation among teachers. However, C4T had overcome this difficulty, so technology issues were not why this teacher was not using OCPs at the time of the study. On the other hand, this teacher pointed out that OCPs require more work than traditional lessons, as shown in the excerpt below:

'Well, they take a lot of organisation and even outside work hours they take a lot of organisation and preparation and a lot of work. Instead, for the students, they are very beautiful because they open their horizons. Even if it seems as though they don't learn much [EFL], but they are projects that stay with them for a long time, like lifelong learning projects that teach lifelong skills that will last forever and even for the teachers too, even if the teachers have to work more than they would if they just do traditional lessons' (C4T interview 3, 11/06/2019).

Although this participant from C4T says that organising OCPs requires more work, they are more memorable to students in long-term education. This fact indicates that memorising is considered an important goal that takes precedence over the use of initiative, as shown in the literature (Buchanan, 2018). However, the same C4T explained that although some students worked harder on OCPs, others wasted time, so they returned to teacher-led lessons where the C4T was able to regain control, as shown below:

'I think that working together, they do more. But I also noticed that they were wasting time because the good students were working but the lazy ones weren't doing anything, so I had to interrupt them and do my traditional lessons' (C4T, Interview 3, 10/06/2019).

Behaviour was another concern, and the students' ability to work well on OCPs was doubted, as noticed by another C4T below:

'I tried to start a new project with a weaker class, but it was a total mess because probably they had no abilities to use';

‘they thought it was just a way to have an hour break, and so it wasn’t effective. It was very effective with good classes but only with good classes’ (C4T interview 1, 17/05/2019).

This participant from C4T felt that the problem lay in the class’s lack of language skills and expected the students to waste time instead of doing the OCP activities. This trepidation could be because this participant from C4T had a cognitive, teacher-led perspective towards EFL teaching as a chronological and linear process of grammar rules set out in textbooks (Ur, 2011). This kind of approach considers teaching to be a one-directional passing of knowledge from teacher to learner (Hung, 2010) even though it promotes collaboration and communication (Xiangui, 2005). Behaviourist and cognitive styles are teacher-led, but C4T was using a cognitive approach. As noted in the literature review, not only it is still prevalent in secondary school EFL curricula (Kern, 2006), but it is also mainstream in SLA theory (Demirezen, 2014).

Cognitive theory perceives learning as a process that relies upon ‘cognitive memory of structures, which perceive, process, store for short or long-term recall and retrieve information, located in the brain’ (Demirezen, 2014, p. 310). According to the literature, Krashen and Terrell (1988) explain that when formal grammar learning outweighs activities that promote natural language acquisition, learners begin to have difficulties in conversation and self-confidence. This approach will lead to students feeling discouraged (Norton, 2016) and even detachment and hostility if they think they are forced into doing things they do not want to do, or find difficult, such as grammar exercises outside of their current capacity (Wenger, 1999).

Furthermore, C4T felt that time spent on these learner-centred activities was time that detracted from what this participant felt to be more important and more valuable, teacher-led activities such as the teaching of formal grammar structures and exercises as explained below:

‘The only problem I had was time because I had to do a lot of things in just three hours so if I devoted one hour a week to these projects, that time was actually stolen from another activity which was important for the English syllabus’ (C4T interview 1, 17/05/2019).

Lack of time was an issue raised in most academic studies in the literature review.

However, as discussed previously, matching OCP objectives with EFL curricula could be achieved in Italian secondary education because of the flexibility teachers are given, as explained in Chapter one. This integration would follow the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) principles (Council of Europe, 2018) (see Section 2.6.1.), which encourages teachers to use collaborative tasks, including sociocultural and social constructivist approaches. Furthermore, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Nikolitsa-Winter et al., 2019) and the United Nations (2015) (Section 2.2.) encourage and promote global communication in education. This study argues that this participant from C4T had decided not to variate his/her curriculum, indicating a misconception of global skills and a limited understanding of the CEFR as highlighted in the literature review (Díez-Bedmar and Byram, 2019).

5.5.1.5. Case-five teachers

Although most C5T teachers responded: *'No difficulties'*, others pointed out issues they had to overcome. The most prominent difficulty C5T had was time issues, as explained in the excerpt below:

'I think the hardest difficulty is the same most of the teachers have: the time. School has its own strict schedule, and so an OCP should be planned accurately otherwise it can be difficult to manage the whole thing' (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 6, 05/2019).

This participant from C5T found that they managed to integrate the OCP into their curriculum with careful planning and organisation. As explained before, the CEFR prioritises tasks and content learning (Council of Europe and Division, 2001). Therefore, EFL curricula should benefit from the integration of an OCP. However, time issues were not only limited to the curriculum. The literature review confirms that teachers decide not to use OCPs because they are extremely busy and do not have the time to prepare and learn new skills (Pallorf and Pratt (1999). The following excerpt from C5T shows how the designing and implementing of OCPs takes time for project administrators:

'These projects are time-consuming, and sometimes you might feel that people do not participate in them the way you want them to.' (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 2, 05/2018);

'There are those who work more and those who work less, it's normal' (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 1, 05/2018).

The first excerpt illustrates a C5T participant's frustration with partners who did not work as much as they had hoped. This difficulty is reflected by Gouseti (2014; 2013), whose studies noticed that irregular participation by some participants had led to a feeling of disappointment by those who had worked hard. It is to be remembered that creating a successful CoP depends upon the increasing participation of members (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, a less experienced participant from C5T believed that different activity levels were expected among participants.

Some C5T also answered that they had had issues with the Internet and materials as in the following excerpts:

'The lack of materials during some lesson hours at our school';

'The connection' (C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019).

This concern was also raised in studies by Akdemir (2017), Camilleri (2016), Maduabuchi (2016) and Gouseti (2014; 2013), who suggest that more support within educational institutions is needed.

5.6. RSQ 4: Teachers' evaluation of their students' EFL skills development

RSQ 4: *How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum?* The last RSQ investigated how teachers felt their students' EFL skills had developed through using OCPs in their EFL lessons. Data collected from teacher cases C4T and C5T were analysed under the three themes of *Language and communication skills, Motivation and Theoretical perspectives*. It is to be noted that the

first two themes are the same as the ones in RSQ 1 that asked how students felt their EFL skills had improved through using OCPs. However, the third theme was named *Learning communities* for student cases and *Theoretical perspectives* for teacher cases because students had not yet got the experience and knowledge of OCPs or EFL methodology to express theory-based understanding in these areas. Scholarship relating to this RSQ are those embracing pedagogical theory in foreign language teaching, especially SLA and SCT, for example, Alajarmeh and Rashed (2019); Kitade (2014); Li (2013); Hung, (2010).

5.6.1. Language and communication skills

Data gathered from C4T and C5T showed that teachers held similar viewpoints in six of the eight aspects of *language and communication skills* occurring across the dataset, as illustrated in Chapter four (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.). Both C4T and C5T noted a general improvement in their students' EFL usage, including a more comprehensive range of vocabulary, increased self-confidence; improved fluency; greater autonomy in speaking skills, improved global and relationship skills, and improved listening and comprehension skills. In addition, C5T noted improvements in reading and writing skills and that OCPs were valuable tools for strengthening EFL. Neither of the teacher cases mentioned reinforced grammar structures or improved grades, even though these were both areas in which C1S and C2S had felt they had improved.

5.6.1.1. Case-four teachers

As explained earlier, C4T teachers were not using OCPs at the time of the study, but they all had a degree of experience. The first interviewee from C4T had found that their

students had shown an improvement in language skills, especially vocabulary, but only those who already had a sound knowledge of grammar, as explained below:

'Well, I believe that they can be really effective, and they can help young students to improve their knowledge of languages, and I also believe that before doing these types of activities students have to have good language skills and also skills regarding relationships and those sorts of things, so I believe, so it's not that easy. So, I don't think that every class can afford these types of activities [...]. For example, I had a really good class in this school, some years ago and they improved really their vocabulary, because they had a project about traditions and all the legends and so they had a chance to enrich their vocabulary, but that was a brilliant class. When I tried to start a new project with a weaker class, but it was a total mess because probably they had no abilities to use' (C4T interview 1, 17/05/2019).

The viewpoint taken by this participant from C4T has its roots in cognitive theory (see Section 4.2.). Cognitive educators believe that grammar must be mastered before a conversation is possible (Hinkel, 2012; Ur, 2011). In addition, this teacher mentioned capabilities regarding relationships. These abilities are incorporated under the term global skills essential for collaboration (Bourn, 2018). Language is key to acquiring these competencies (Mercer et al., 2019).

Another C4T teacher said that, although the EFL skills acquired using OCPs are not measurable, other important skills that are inherent to language learning could be developed, as stated below:

‘Despite the fact that it seems as if the students miss out on schoolwork, but I’ve seen that with Erasmus projects, although they don’t learn that much English, they become more open-minded. In their learning, they’re not so shy when they speak and not so worried about making mistakes. Even if they make mistakes, they speak anyway. They don’t usually do this because in the classroom doing traditional lessons, they are shy of the teacher who is assessing them, and this is true because we have to do this, but often they are shy in front of their friends too in case they might laugh at them or if they have better pronunciation than them et cetera. Instead, after Erasmus,⁶ they speak much more fluently, whether they speak well or not’ (C4T, Interview 3, 11/06/2019).

Students’ self-confidence increased while using EFL to communicate with peers from other schools and countries, suggesting that the OCP had provided an awareness of their learning and encouraged them to be responsible for it (Bangert, 2004). This excerpt indicates that although this participant from C4T was inclined towards teacher-led methods, the experience of using an OCP had made this participant from C4T reflect upon other ways of learning.

⁶ It is to be noted that the Erasmus plus mobility projects done with the school in question incorporated OCPs using eTwinning. However, since a minority of students were able to travel, most learning was done through the OCPs.

5.6.1.2. Case-five teachers

As far as the theme of *Language and communication* was concerned, C5T felt their students had practised all skills related to EFL when working on OCP activities:

‘Students practise the four language skills’;

‘throughout the project, they need to focus on their writing and speaking skills. It is a combination of language learning and content’ (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 1, 05/2018).

Along with other comments made by this group, this example suggests that C5T believed that syntax is acquired naturally through authentic comprehensible input and relaxed low-anxiety settings as with cognitive theory in SLA.

Instead, SCT recognises that learning needs to be independent if it is a lifelong experience and not confined to the classroom. The following quote confirms this view:

‘Everything can be used to improve lexis, fluency and speaking skills in general; but this is just the first step. It is a lifelong process’ (C5T, Interview 7, 06/2019).

In addition, unless students use EFL as a tool for communication, they cannot understand the value of learning it:

‘Educational communities are very helpful, because they make students understand how useful English is, especially in my country where it is not used in the daily life’ (C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019).

The value of learning EFL, or any MFL, is central to human progress in intellectual, sociocultural and developmental aspects (Nikolitsa-Winter et al., 2019). It can also help in reducing the digital divide by increasing global awareness and understanding (United Nations, 2015). The following excerpt confirms that authentic situations inspire communication and language learning (Alajarmeh and Rashed, 2019; Li, 2013; Wells, 2006):

‘You don’t have to invent a situation so that they use the English language. The situations are in the [OCP], and they naturally use English because hardly anyone speaks their mother tongue’ (C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019).

This final example illustrates the view that communication and collaboration in EFL through OCPs activities can encourage self-confidence (Crişan, 2013; Kitade, 2014):

‘My students tend to get better self-confidence when it comes to teamwork and speaking activities’ (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 2, 2018).

These quotes echo claims expressed in the literature concerning how language is exchanged and constructed in an authentic small-scale community (Gajek, 2018). In this way, OCPs can generate a virtual CoP where Lave and Wenger (1991) claim that learners can become independent and self-confident in their learning and continue cultivating acquired skills throughout their lives. Moreover, the above quotes also align with claims of Gilleran et al. (2017), whose report shows that students who live in remote parts of the world with little prospect of travel have the opportunity to meet and interact with people from other schools and countries using EFL as a tool for communication. These factors give value to learning EFL and provide inspirational alternatives to standardised textbooks that dictate curricula (Owens, 2013).

5.6.2. Motivation

Under the theme of *Motivation*, evidence was sought that showed how teachers felt that their students were motivated to learn EFL when using OCPs. Both teacher cases (C4T and C5T) expressed the belief that their students were encouraged by nurturing a positive EFL learner identity gained through communicating with peers using EFL. A cross-case analysis (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.), involving the whole OCPCluster dataset, showed that common to all five cases was the belief that authentic communication in EFL with peers from other schools and countries promoted positive EFL identity. However, all cases but C4T believed the enjoyable qualities of OCP activities were motivational aspects. Finally, it is to be noted that most of the scholarship supporting the theme of *Motivation* was related to the motivational qualities of sociocultural environments and intrinsic motivation (McInerney et al., 2014; Wigfield et al., 2012).

5.6.2.1. Case-four teachers

Despite not using OCPs at the time of the study, C4T teachers recognised the motivational value of OCPs, as illustrated in the excerpts below:

'I believe that this kind of project can really increase motivation and if they increase their motivation, then they will even increase their learning skills, even grammar' (C4T, Interview 1, 17/05/2019);

'The advanced students test what they know and show off how good they are, and they can improve and reach a high level of English. Instead, for the students with more difficulties, it can be like a language gymnasium where they can practice. Whereas in class it's much more difficult. It's impossible to make a gymnasium

where they can speak. Either it's me who's speaking, or it's them who asks me questions, and it's more likely they will ask the questions in Italian. Instead, they have to speak in English with foreign peers' (C4T, Interview 3, 10/06/2019).

C4T explained how students' self-confidence and motivation were increased according to Wigfield et al. (2012), who explains that when learners are intrinsically motivated to learn a language, they will do so even outside of the classroom. This enthusiasm was due to authentic contexts and the community atmosphere created where EFL was the language of communication. Likewise, C4T's description of how advanced students' showed off' their skills is in line with Elliot's (1999) view that students can be motivated by feeling as competent as, or more skilled than, their peers. The comparison of an OCP to a 'language gymnasium' also suggests that EFL was being used dynamically.

5.6.2.2. Case-five teachers

In contrast to C4T, who felt that OCPs could improve motivation and that language skills were improved when students were motivated, C5T say that it is the collaboration that encourages learning, and it is the learning itself that is inspiring. As far as C5T teachers were concerned, the collaborative properties of OCPs were of fundamental motivational value for learning EFL, as shown below:

'It is probably one of the biggest advantages of using OCPs when doing projects. Students who collaborate with peers outside of their classroom develop their global competence (learn about new countries, traditions, cultures, share and develop ideas together with other students, investigate their own identity and culture from a

different point of view, articulate the differences between each other, learn to accept others). ' (C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 6, 06/2019).

These quotes claim that collaboration encourages the acquisition of global skills. As clarified in the literature, global competence is fundamental in dealing with today's global society (Bourn, 2018). As MFLs are tools that can facilitate the acquisition of global skills (Mercer et al., 2019), it can be deduced that EFL is being used successfully for this purpose.

Other excerpts echoed Ware and O'Dowd (2008), who acknowledged that collaboration is the key to motivation, as illustrated by the following comments below:

'There is a task for everyone. Students feel gratified by seeing their work published on a website and knowing that other people can see it. They enjoy seeing other people's work. and they love connecting with Skype and meeting peers in foreign places.' (C5T, Interview 4, 05/2019);

'When students have to communicate with a project peer, they need to speak in English, therefore, they learn something in a different way, it could be the same as what they would have learned from books, but in this way, they will remember it all better. It is a completely different approach to learning the language. With these projects they did grammar too without realising it. I think that if they don't enjoy what they are doing, they won't learn' (C5T, Individual-Interview 3, 14/11/2018).

These results show that C5T felt that collaborating on OCP activities encouraged the acquisition of global skills more than using textbooks. This fact confirmed Wingate's

(2016) study that showed how artificially constructed situations such as those in books are less effective than meaningful, authentic activities, such as those explicitly prepared with the learners' sociocultural settings in mind.

5.6.3. Theoretical perspectives

The theme of *Theoretical perspectives* was defined as comprising evidence of teachers' scholarship-informed viewpoints on learning and teaching EFL. Codes making up this theme were: *Social constructivism, SCT; Cognitive approach*, and *Behaviourism* through teachers' perspectives on learning EFL. For example, any evidence of pedagogical theory in EFL, including learner-centred or teacher-led approaches. Students' data relating to this theme was presented under the heading: *Learning communities* (see Section 5.3.3.), where evidence was found in all aspects (*Communication, Collaboration, Self-confidence and Socialisation and Inclusion*) and from all cases. However, the results of this theme for teacher cases showed a clear division in theoretical viewpoints between C4T and C5T: the former favouring a teacher-led approach, and the latter, a learner-centred one.

5.6.3.1. Case-four teachers

C4T preferred a teacher-led approach to teaching. This was evident from all C4T data because it indicated a preference for a linear curriculum whereby communication could be expected only after the required grammar rules had been mastered (Demirezen, 2014; Hinkel, 2012; Ur, 2011) as shown below:

'Above all, they need to learn grammar. Grammar is important at the beginning of high school, in my opinion. It is a kind of, you know, from that starting they can feel

more confident because they can learn the timeline, I mean when they know the tenses' (C4T interview 1, 17/05/2019).

The following illustrative excerpt shows how C4T felt they needed to provide their students with information;

'I think you need both; a traditional lesson, maybe not traditional, but where you explain things to them' (C4T, Interview 3, 10/06/2019).

Both cognitive and behaviourist teaching methods can be considered teacher-led approaches that favour the unilateral passage of knowledge from the teacher to student (Hung, 2010). They encourage imitation and see students as receptacles that are void of previous knowledge (Hung, 2010). In addition, these didactics homogenise learners by assuming that all human beings learn in the same way (Weeger and Pacis, 2012). The following example illustrates how a C4T teacher aimed to create a class where all students were of a similar level in EFL:

'I'd like to do it [an OCP] with the first years, but when I get a first year, I always spend too long trying to let them catch up with each other, and I have never found the right time' (C4T interview 3, 11/06/2019).

This excerpt reveals how C4T was trying to establish a standard level of English in the class. This fact could be due to the education policy in Italy that requires students to reach level B2 in the CEFR assessment scale by the end of their secondary school education (INDIRE, 2014). However, statistics from the 'Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del

sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione’ (Ajello, 2019)⁷ showed that the EFL level in the location where this study is taking place was much lower than expected, with most students not even reaching B1 (Ajello, 2019; INVALSI, 2019). Another reason C4T wanted students to ‘catch up with each other’ is because cognitive theory takes the standpoint that language can be learnt in the same way by all learners, independent of the context in which they live. At the same time, SCT scholars argue that ‘accuracy and fluency will vary, according to everyday contexts’ (Dooly, 2003, p. 3).

The C4T teacher, who had worked as a Cambridge examiner but had had little experience teaching in secondary schools, avoided using technology in her lessons completely and categorised OCPs as ‘computer teaching’. This preconception is most likely because this teacher’s extensive experience had been in training students to pass quantifiable grammar-focused exams:

‘In my opinion? What I like doing? I don’t really do a lot of computer teaching, because I do some other types of projects. So, it limits my time. My time is limited [...]. Yeah, well, it’s a little difficult to explain. Plenty, because you know when I do projects, it’s only twenty hours. In that 20 hours, if I only occupy ten, then I don’t train them for the examination’ (C4T interview 2, 10/06/2019).

This excerpt shows that this participant from C4T felt that the only way students can learn EFL is with teacher-led lessons. The examinations this participant from C4T referred to are structured ones tested by external examining boards such as the Cambridge Assessment

⁷ The English translation is: the Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of Education Systems.

English and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). In the school where the researcher works, they are optional, financed by the student's families, and taught outside of school hours and curriculum. In keeping with theory in behaviourism, mistakes are not acceptable with these exams. Likewise, this teacher uses an approach of repetition and imitation (Hung, 2010) to teach them:

'Also repeating over again just like you would with a very small child, writing from Italian into English it's very difficult because they listen to the words, they hear the sounds like they do in Italian, but that is not good. So, what do you do? In that case, you get them to write five times the words; you get them to do anagram; fill in the spaces like cloze and then fill in the gap see all of the things, but all of these things take lots of time' (C4T interview 2, 10/06/2019).

The teaching methods described above are indicative of the Audio-lingual Method, which was a dominant approach for teaching MFLs in the US during the 1950s and 60s (McArthur, Lam-McArthur and Fontaine, 2018b; Szecsy, 2008), that is at the time in which and the place where this teacher went to school. Its roots are in behaviourism, whereby 'language acquisition is considered a matter of habit formation' by using repetition and drills (Szecsy, 2008, p. 50). In addition, an Audio-lingual Method is a teacher-led approach centred around the students listening to the teacher and imitating language-habit formation through memorisation and drills. This method aims to reach linguistic accuracy and avoid any mistakes in morphosyntax (Szecsy, 2008), and necessary when training students to pass structured examinations such as Cambridge and IELTS (Gajek, 2018; Helm and Dooly, 2017; Gouseti, 2013).

Finally, one participant from C4T noticed how the most challenging OCP was the one that the students liked most:

‘The funny thing is that the most complicated project was the most interesting one, the one about traditions was the most popular. But then it was an excellent class. While the other projects were for weaker classes’ (C4T interview 1, 17/05/2019).

This quote confirms the principle, detailed in the literature, that students need a practical challenge to improve. However, unless they feel the activity is worth doing, they will not take it seriously (Ellis, 2003). Likewise, if it is too easy or too difficult, it is also unsuccessful.

5.6.3.2. Case-five teachers

In contrast to C4T, C5T was using OCPs because they appreciated the advantages of taking a learner-centred, social constructivist approach to teaching. In this way, students learned from each other while working on tasks that were pitched at an appropriate level and encouraged students to become independent in their learning (Ortega, 2014), as illustrated by the following comment:

‘OCPs promote collaborative learning: students learn from each other, interact, communicate and thus feel responsible for their learning’ (C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019).

This finding indicates the importance of peer support in collaboration and communication, also evident in data from C2S and discussed in Section 5.3.3.2. of this chapter. This view was echoed below:

'I believe that the most important purpose of global and online projects is to foster global perspectives among our students. We need to bring the world to our students if we are to focus on the 21st century skills and build global understandings' (C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 2, 05/2018).

The idea of opening the class to the world confirms Hampel (2006), who explains how people living in different locations with diverse historical contexts, cultures, learning requirements and attitudes, can make social interaction a rich and rewarding experience (Hampel, 2006). The following excerpt shows how this participant from C5T valued the authenticity of OCPs in their EFL lessons and felt that a feeling of community and inclusion was formed when their students collaborated with peers on topics that they felt were important:

'They enjoy interacting with peers in real-time situations instead of doing exercises in a book. Another positive factor is that they all feel included by being part of a project since this is something which is not common in my school' (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 2, 2018).

The feeling of 'inclusion' in the OCP group indicated a successful sociocultural CoP might have been created. Learners seemed to have constructed a positive identity as their participation in the OCP activities progressed, and they became experts (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

This final C5T excerpt indicates that level of English does not need to be a problem if learners are offered as many opportunities to interact with other English or EFL speaking peers as possible:

‘they should connect with peers from all over the world, participate in exchanges, watch English TV series, using apps every day, create their own projects in English, record blogs, write blogs, reading books and online texts, share their work with other learners regardless of their level (C5T, Online Open-Questionnaire 1, 2018).

This quote confirms the fundamental sociocultural principle that socialising with peers with different sociocultural backgrounds in engaging activities can strengthen independent learning skills (Hung, 2010; Allen, 2005; Bruner, 1986).

5.7. Discussion

In answer to RSQ 1, all but one student out of a total of one hundred and sixteen students from C1S, C2S and C3S, felt they had improved their EFL skills through using OCPs. This study revealed that the fundamental differences among student cases in how they perceived their sociocultural backgrounds had influenced their EFL progress. C1S and C2S were taught by EFL teachers who favoured teacher-led methods, driven by assessment-led, grammar-focused lessons that resulted in C1S’s concern with learning grammar structures. In contrast, C2S had found the teacher-led classes that had focused on grammar difficult and uninteresting, leading them to reject the study of EFL altogether (see Section 5.3.2.2.).

On the other hand, C2S said that they had enjoyed learning EFL through the use of OCPs and felt that they had made EFL learning more accessible and noticed a general improvement in their language skills, confirmed by the higher grades they had achieved. Moreover, the higher grades resulted in an improvement in C2S’s self-confidence and identity as EFL speakers seemed to encourage them to learn more. These outcomes have

shown how C1S and C2S's individual learning needs seem to have been met by the learner-centred teaching approach required for OCPs. This improvement was likely to have been because students could use their own values and experiences to work on interesting and important issues and at their own individual pace (Davydov and Markova, 1982).

At the same time, the OCP was used as an explicit mediational tool for communication (Wertsch, 2007) with the potential of generating a functioning CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991). C3S also gave evidence that knowledge and learning are unique to the individual, sociocultural settings. C3S echoed most of what was said by C1S and C2S but gave more expansive results because the participants in C3S were a large group of fifty-seven students from different schools located in various countries and sociocultural backgrounds. Data collected from C1S, C2S and C3S showed that the relaxed, inclusive atmosphere of the learner-centred OCP activities motivated students into communicating, collaborating and socialising with each other, which Vygotsky (2017 [1929]) asserts is key to learning and is central to SCT. However, the cognitive theory also encourages communication in relaxed environments. For example, Krashen and Terrell's (1988) natural approach maintains that language can only be effectively acquired when done in an anxiety-free atmosphere.

RSQ 2 explored how teachers' felt they had developed professionally, as EFL teachers, through using OCPs. In a similar way to student cases, teachers' assumptions were also influenced by their sociocultural backgrounds. C5T gave evidence that they felt they had developed professionally by socialising and collaborating with more knowledgeable colleagues when using an OCP as a mediational tool (see Section 2.5.5.2.) (Wertsch, 2007). This improvement also indicated that an online CoP had been created as teachers began to feel part of a successful, innovative group that shared experiences and learnt from each other (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The result suggested that C5T's self-confidence as

EFL teachers was enriched (Kitade, 2014; Crişan, 2013), and they were encouraged to explore and experiment with new ideas and potentially become expert teachers themselves (Tsui, 2011).

Although both teacher cases believed they could learn from each other and develop professionally through using OCPs, C4T had chosen not to integrate OCPs into their EFL curricula. This study argued that in the same way that their sociocultural backgrounds determine students' assumptions about EFL skills, so are teachers' conceptions concerning the value of OCPs. Evidence (see Section 5.6.3.1.) illustrated how C4T seemed to reject the nonconformity of social constructivist approaches, preferring teacher-led methods such as those generated by behaviourism and cognitivism. The literature review described these approaches as favouring a linear, grammar-focused, assessment-led curriculum that saw teaching as a passing of knowledge from teacher to student (Demirezen, 2014; Hinkel, 2012; Ur, 2011; Hung, 2010). Additionally, findings (see Section 5.6.3.1.) showed that C4T was influenced by how they were taught themselves when they were students. Oleson and Hora (2013) explain that teachers are less likely to be open to change if they do not have the opportunity to collaborate with people with different sociocultural experiences. In answer to this issue, this study suggested that working on OCPs with colleagues with mixed cultural, social and historical backgrounds could provide an opportunity for teachers to experience contrasting approaches and assumptions. This idea is also recognised in the literature by Gajek (2018) and Gulbay (2018), who say that teachers can experience and experiment with new theory by collaborating on OCPs.

In response to RSQ 3, although most participants from all cases, except for C4T, said they had found no difficulties or drawbacks while using OCPs as a tool for learning or teaching EFL, a few issues were mentioned. The fundamental problems common to all cases were

related to time but in various ways that depended upon the sociocultural influences that were individual to each case. The three student cases all said they needed more time to complete the OCP activities. In fact, Vygotsky (2011[1935]) explained that the amount of time required to do an activity depends upon the learner's intellectual development. However, the inflexibility of some EFL curricula does not allow for extra time. Additionally, as Jones (2015) pointed out (see Section 2.3.2.), the lack of communication tools and a connection to the Internet can also be a source of inequality and exclusion. Therefore, this study suggests that OCP activities should be undertaken at school with the teacher's guidance and that students need to be given access to the school's resources. When planning OCP activities, time needs to be allowed for issues with the Internet, the lack of functioning tools, and catering for individuals' varied learning needs.

C5T pointed out the extra time required for the organisation and planning of OCPs to cater to the EFL curriculum. This suggestion confirms Palloff and Pratt (1999), who point out that teachers do not have time to prepare lessons or learn new skills. In contrast, C4T felt uncomfortable using lesson time for OCPs because they felt it better spent in grammar-focused teacher-led studies. This preference could have been because C4T assumed that teacher-led approaches and the teaching of grammar structures were the only way that learners would improve their EFL skills. The literature explained how teacher-led curricula, such as those that draw upon the theory in behaviourism and cognitivism, follow a linear order of grammar structures (Demirezen, 2014; Hinkel, 2012; Ur, 2011). However, the results from C2S show how a prevalence of this method can be damaging because it standardises EFL knowledge and overlooks individual needs by treating all learners in the same way (Weeger and Pacis, 2012). In contrast, OCP activities require learner-centred techniques that conform with social constructivist, sociocultural paradigms. In this way,

accuracy and autonomy are allowed to develop according to the learners and their unique sociocultural context (Dooly, 2003).

As far as student cases were concerned, while C2S found working with peers to be a strength of learning EFL through OCPs, some participants from C1S and C3S mentioned drawbacks they had come across. This study suggests that this might have been because C2S did not respond well to teacher-led environments and flourished when given the autonomy to learn at their own pace in the company of peers, thus producing an effective CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991). On the other hand, C1S and C3S both pointed out issues with group work, the former because some peers worked less than others, while the latter (C3S) could not work in the way they wanted. These were drawbacks that could have been avoided if groups were small and of a similar age and level (Krashen, 2003). However, students need autonomy in the choice of their partners as is appropriate for sociocultural CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Lastly, some C3S participants found using EFL to be a source of anxiety when presenting something to their class or when they could not understand international peers in synchronous communication. However, many of the difficulties mentioned could be resolved, and C1S, C2S and C5T all suggested ways of overcoming OCP issues.

The fourth and final RSQ addressed teachers' perceptions of how their students' EFL skills had developed by integrating OCPs into their curriculum. Results from C4T and C5T showed that participants from both cases felt that their students showed a general improvement in EFL skills, including vocabulary knowledge, fluency and comprehension. They also noticed increased self-confidence and greater global awareness. However, the incompatibility with OCPs of the ontological and epistemological beliefs held by C4T led them to doubt the value of OCPs for EFL curricula. When comparing student outcomes

from RSQ 1 with teacher data from this RSQ, it was evident that all parties believed that students had improved their EFL skills in areas of vocabulary knowledge, fluency and comprehension, and were motivated by authentic communication in EFL with peers. Moreover, although C1S were concerned with learning grammar structures, all student cases, C1S, C2S and C3S, appreciated the learner-centred community environment created by OCPs, which is key to social constructive approaches to teaching and SCT (Wertsch, 2007). Results referred to in this section are summarised in table format in Appendix D.16.

5.7.1. Main research question: How can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in secondary school settings?

This study has shown that OCPs have the potential to support the learning and teaching of EFL in secondary school settings in various ways. Teachers in this research, who chose to use OCPs in their EFL lessons, felt they had learnt new teaching methods and tools from other more experienced teachers, helping them to feel more self-confident. This motivated them to look for new ways of enhancing their practices and improving their relationships with their students. Likewise, authentic collaboration and communication through OCP activities encouraged the secondary-school students in this study into wanting to improve their EFL skills. However, results from the RSQs suggest that the success of OCPs as learning and teaching tools for EFL in secondary school settings depended upon the sociocultural backgrounds of learners and teachers and their theoretical perspectives. Figure three shows that for an OCP to be successful, the EFL student needs to be placed at the centre of the learning process because sociocultural stimuli, including EFL teachers and classroom peers, determine and influence learning and are unique to every individual.

When learning EFL through OCP activities, these influences will command collaboration, communication, and socialisation among OCP participants whereby the teacher takes part in the class community and organisation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This study suggests that a balance is given to all the influences in a learner's life, not just the teacher, as with a teacher-led environment. Moreover, OCPs ought not to stand alone but should be part of a rich and varied curriculum to be fully appreciated.

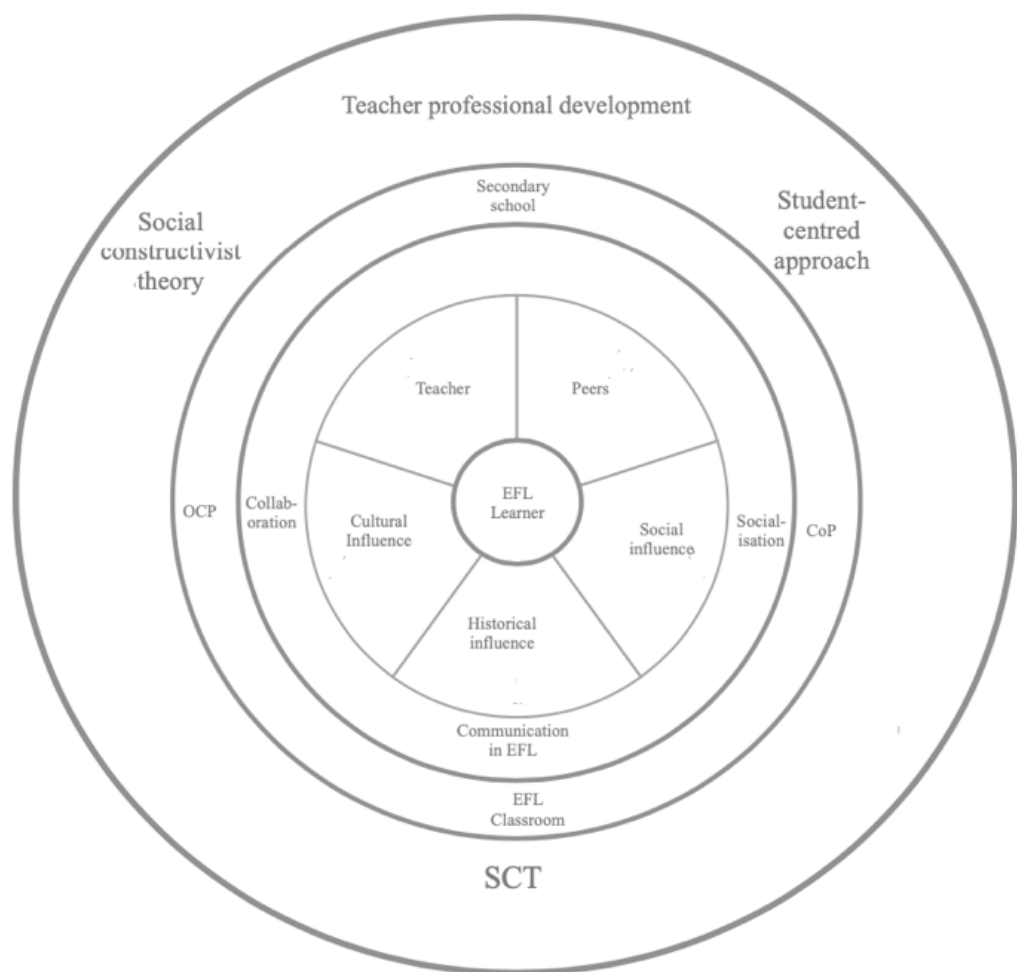


Figure 3: How can OCPs support the learning and teaching of EFL in secondary school settings?

Figure four presents a suggestion for an optimal EFL curriculum that uses a combination of approaches and methods. LPP and CoPs are means of learning that can combine any knowledge (Rogoff, 2003), including IT tools, teaching approaches, or even pedagogical methodologies (Nicolson et al., 2011). Although OCPs command social constructivist teaching methods and learner-centred techniques, theory from cognitive SLA theory was valid in many circumstances with evidence from across the dataset supporting Krashen's (2003) theory on comprehensible input and grammar correction. Likewise, it has revealed that many teachers still favour approaches that draw upon the theory of behaviourism, and they cannot be expected to change their philosophical beliefs. In addition, quality education is a fundamental human right (Murphy, 2019), and the theory of humanism should not be overlooked.

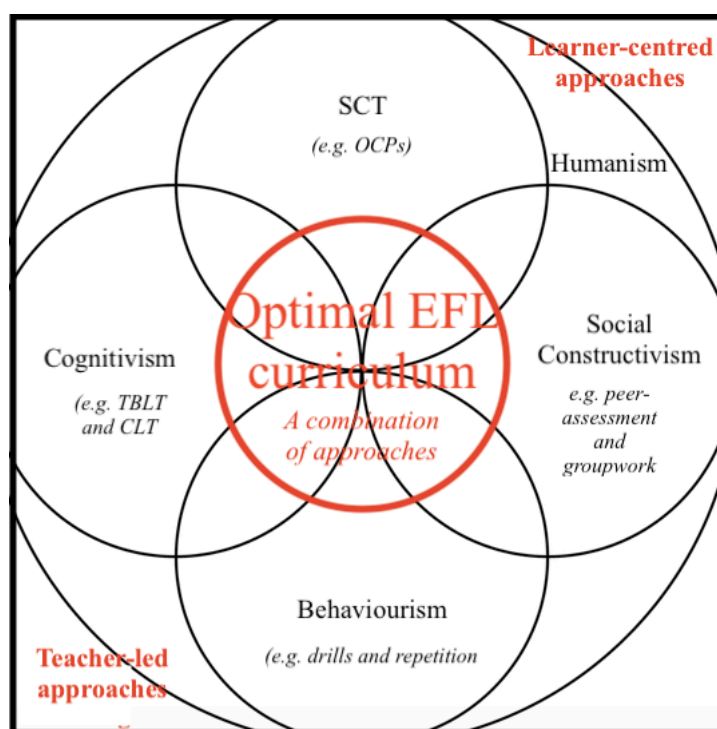


Figure 4: Optimal EFL Curriculum blend

In light of the results of this investigation, this study concludes that OCPs could be a valuable tool for both teachers and learners of EFL. By integrating an OCP into the EFL curriculum, students could learn at their own unique pace and have the potential to become independent EFL learners. At the same time, teachers could develop professionally as EFL teachers and learn how to incorporate learner-centred activities into their lessons. At the same time, the EFL curriculum should be rich and varied to account for as many different learning requirements as there are students in the classroom and EFL curricula should not reject any approaches that might be valuable in some instances. Nevertheless, although this study has shown how a prevalence of teacher-led strategies can be damaging to some students, they are still mainstream in secondary school EFL classes in this geographical area and possibly in many others (Demirezen, 2014; Xiangui, 2005). OCPs could improve this situation, but until teachers are equipped with skills in social constructivist teaching, they are unlikely to take OCPs seriously or to exercise learner-centred methods at all.

5.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, after having provided a detailed description of the seven OCPs active during the three AR cycles, this chapter has presented the findings of the thematic analysis procedure under the four RSQs. Each question was divided into the main themes worthy of discussion and subsequently into the cases that answered the question. The cross-case analysis done in phase three of data collection (see Table seven, Section 4.3.3.) provided the background for a detailed and reflective answer to each of the RSQs. Themes were supported with examples from across the dataset to represent best each case making up the OCPCluster. Excerpts were then analysed and linked to the literature reviewed in Chapter two. After the findings had been reported, the OCPCluster was then explored and examined, leading to a greater understanding of how OCPs can support the learning and

teaching of EFL in secondary education. Finally, the results were summarised and discussed to address the main research question. The results were that OCPs could be a valuable addition to the EFL curriculum by providing teachers and learners with a sociocultural space to realise the potential of social constructivist learner-centred methods. On the other hand, a single teaching method can have adverse effects on some EFL learners, and so a blend of approaches in the EFL curriculum is advised. The next and final chapter will conclude the thesis by discussing the effectiveness, implications and limitations of the study.

Chapter 6. Conclusions

This final chapter draws together the discussion of the findings from Chapter five and outlines the new understandings that the study has uncovered concerning the research questions:

Main research question

How can Online Community Projects (OCPs) support the learning and teaching of EFL (English as a foreign language) in secondary school settings?

Research sub-questions

1. How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?
2. How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?
3. What difficulties and drawbacks have teachers and students encountered while using an OCP?
4. How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed by integrating OCPs in their curriculum?

To conclude this enquiry, the chapter is divided into six sections. The first one addresses the significance and implications of this study regarding the main research question. Next, the effectiveness of the Action research (AR) approach and Multiple case study (MCS) methods used in this study are discussed and evaluated. Subsequently, the potential sources of bias common to practitioner-researchers are discussed, and the limitations of the study are acknowledged. Recommendations and areas of further research are suggested in light of these results. Finally, the researcher's intentions regarding sharing the results are outlined, and the chapter is concluded.

6.1. Implications of Findings

The findings discussed in Chapter five of this enquiry have raised important implications for EFL teachers and researcher-practitioners who hope to improve their practices. The results have shown that the social constructivist properties of OCPs can make them valuable tools for EFL teachers and students. The most apparent finding concerning the perceptions of teachers using OCPs in this study is that the carefully planned integration of an OCP into the EFL curriculum had helped them develop professionally and had strengthened their students' EFL skills. They were also alerted to the advantages of learner-centred methods and learned to incorporate them into their EFL curricula. On the other hand, the teachers in this study who chose not to use OCPs, made this choice because they preferred teacher-led methods that were incompatible with learner-centred OCP activities.

As far as the students in this study were concerned, a significant finding was that the collaborative atmosphere generated by learner-centred OCP activities allowed students to work at their own pace and focus on the areas of EFL that they believed to be important. Furthermore, activities were interpreted differently by each group of students who chose and worked on topics that corresponded to their unique sociocultural contexts. The learner-centred OCP settings allowed learners to determine their own values and experiences and learn independently. This autonomy helped to improve self-confidence and motivate learning. Taking all these issues into account, the research findings of this study have implications for schools in Italy and other countries, augmenting existing knowledge of EFL in secondary-school education. This thesis has demonstrated how integrating OCPs into school curricula can provide an effective tool for collaboration and communication

among global communities, as encouraged by the United Nations and the European Union (see Sections 2.2. and 2.6.1.).

In addition, although this study deals with EFL, the findings may also prove valuable to other MFLs and even to other subjects. The evidence has shown that, by integrating learner-centred teaching approaches into EFL curricula, teachers and learners can recognise what is useful, interesting and motivating in their unique sociocultural contexts. The implementation of OCPs can actively promote such approaches. This study has also provided insight into why findings from research in higher education are not always transferable to secondary-school contexts, indicating that more academic research explicitly targeted at such settings is needed in the area of EFL. Finally, this enquiry has uncovered some of the difficulties that OCP users are likely to encounter and has suggested measures that could help overcome them. The exploration of such challenges has also shed light on reasons that prevent some teachers from using OCPs in their teaching and may contribute to developing strategies to promote wider uptake.

6.2. Effectiveness of methods used

The methodological approach taken in this enquiry was qualitative. The choice of Action Research (AR) methodology was a natural one for the researcher, an EFL secondary-school teacher and an OCP user. This study has taken the position that practitioner researchers have the advantage of experience and understanding of the workplace. It also recognises the disadvantage that power relations between teachers and students can have on data collection (Denzin, 2006). This concern was justified using a five-case MCS that ensured a well-balanced dataset that included data from participants who were doing OCPs with the researcher and involved data from those unknown to her. A different perspective

was gained from EFL teachers who were not using OCPs at the time of the study. These choices contributed to minimising bias in the results. The choice of thematic analysis ensured that the extensive data were analysed rather than just described (Guest, 2012),

The qualitative data for this study was obtained from face-to-face interviews, emails and online open-question questionnaires. The face-to-face interviews with the student participants were held in a supportive atmosphere that encouraged enjoyment and openness. They were encouraged to reflect upon their own experiences and opinions on EFL learning in general and views specific to OCPs, so they would feel relaxed and not be led to think that they should give special priority to responses about OCPs. Likewise, the opportunity to write emails gave students a chance to express their views after reflecting upon them. Students from schools in other cities and countries enriched the dataset because the online open-question questionnaires were anonymous and answered by learners who did not know the researcher, providing contrast in experiences necessary to give a complete picture of students' perceptions.

The methods used in this study could be of interest to other researchers in education who intend to use a social constructivist paradigm. The richness of the findings of this study confirms that analysis of qualitative data is a good choice for understanding complex experiences within separate social worlds, in this instance, those of teachers and learners using OCPs in an EFL secondary school setting. It has also shown that 'insider' or practitioner research can make a valuable contribution to researching mediation tools such as OCPs and that AR offers the flexibility necessary to drive continuous improvement through successive research cycles. In addition, the use of the five multiple cases that made up the OCPCluster showed how the introduction of contrasting viewpoints could mitigate potential sources of bias and increase the likelihood of results having wider

generalisability. Furthermore, this study has addressed some of the difficulties an educational researcher may meet when researching secondary school settings similar to those described in this thesis. These challenges include working with minors, selecting participants and managing the time and space necessary to conduct interviews.

6.3. Potential sources of bias and limitations

The flexible and reflective nature of AR offered the opportunity to resolve issues as they arose, such as ways of making the interviews more relaxed and productive despite the strict school timetable. In addition, establishing rigorous values and goals facilitated rigorous critical analysis of interpretations that reduced personal biases. However, it was inevitable that the researcher's understanding influenced interpretations due to sociocultural influences (Stake, 2000). As mentioned previously, a potential source of bias for the study was the effect the researcher might have had upon Case-one students (C1S) and Case-two students (C2S) as their teacher. However, measures were taken to avoid influencing students' answers, such as explaining to them that there was no right or wrong answer and interviewing them in small groups so they did not feel intimidated or threatened. In addition, it might be questioned whether the small number of EFL teachers in this study who did not use OCPs, can represent other teachers who make this choice. However, as stated in Chapter three of this thesis, the choice of MCS was not to generalise or to replicate, but to observe a variety of perspectives and to support findings with reflective and generous descriptions.

Additionally, the anonymous feature of open-question online questionnaires might suggest that Case-three students (C3S) were less likely to give answers to please their teachers than the other two student cases who were interviewed face-to-face. More difficulties in

learning EFL with OCPs were revealed in data from C3S than either C1S or C2S. A disadvantage to this anonymous data-collection tool is that follow-up questions were not possible, so the difficulties found by C3S could not be explored further. It could also be argued that the validity of student responses could have been compromised by their lack of experience and knowledge of OCPs and EFL methodology. But this is true of most secondary school students, while their perspectives were essential in depicting a well-balanced representation of the OCP cluster. Another source of inherent bias could be that the researcher interviewed the C1S who finished their OCP activities early. The precociousness of these students might suggest that they were more advanced in EFL than other students, and so results could be biased. However, C1S was chosen to represent motivated EFL students and the fact that these students finished their work earlier than the others would indicate that this was true.

6.4. Recommendations

Notwithstanding the limitations described above, the study has provided some valuable insights into the importance of blending learner-centred approaches, such as those experienced with OCPs, into otherwise primarily teacher-led EFL curricula in secondary schools. This study has shown that the predominant use of teacher-led methods was not supporting some of the students' learning of EFL. Although the current research is based on a small sample of participants, the findings may well have a bearing on other settings with similar situations. Therefore, in the light of these results, this study recommends that education systems provide EFL and MFL (Modern Foreign Language) teachers with training in technology-enhanced social constructivist tools such as OCPs and support for implementing these technologies.

6.5. Future Research

A natural progression of this work would be to analyse the use of OCPs in other MFLs to expand the research to include more schools and teachers who run OCPs. More research into the teaching of EFL, with and without OCPs, is needed in secondary education, particularly in Italy (Morgana and Shrestha, 2018), because EFL is a key subject in many state-secondary schools within the EU and many other countries (Berns, 2008; Berns, 2020). Moreover, if the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of OCPs is needed. Although the European Union publish regular reports for eTwinning, such as Gilleran et al. (2019), the researcher found little academic research into their value regarding EFL. In addition, more academic study into the advantages or disadvantages of other potential platforms would be valuable because teachers could make use of WordPress, Google sites, Facebook, Moodle and many more social network tools and platforms. Finally, a further study could assess the long-term effects of using OCPs in EFL practices, not only in terms of the context and teachers but also on the learning and development of the students.

6.6. Sharing results

This work offers implications to schools in Italy and other countries and contributes to existing knowledge of EFL in secondary-school education. It has explained how integrating OCPs into school curricula could provide an effective tool for collaboration and communication among global communities, as encouraged by the United Nations and the European Union (see Sections 2.2. and 2.6.1.).

Now that this study is completed, it is essential to share the results with as broad an audience as possible to encourage other EFL and modern language teachers to experiment

with OCPs in their curriculum and take advantage of them in their professional development. The British Council was informed of the research and its relevance to eTwinning, and they asked to see the results. The same was true for many teacher participants, so the researcher agreed to share the study outcomes with them when completed. Throughout the study, the researcher has presented the enquiry in various conferences with the Open University and outside. For example, it was introduced in person at the annual meeting in Brighton with the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). It was also presented online at the Online International Doctoral Research Conference in Education 2020, with the Liverpool John Moores University and online at the EdD Colloquium with the Oxford Brookes University, School of Education. The researcher intends to continue speaking about the study, its results and its implications in teacher-development courses and seminars.

6.7. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this study results from the researcher's professional interest in the use of OCPs for the learning and teaching of EFL, cultivated during a long teaching career within the context of secondary school education in the rural south of Italy. Although there is a wide selection of studies into teaching methods using technology, such as those listed in the literature review chapter of this thesis, there is little academic research into the experience of using OCPs in secondary-school EFL classrooms, despite the growing number of EFL schoolteachers using them all over the world (Gilleran, 2019). This enquiry has begun to address the need for a better understanding of their potential to support learning and teaching in secondary EFL classrooms and beyond. Finally, the methods described in this study offer a helpful resource for other researcher-practitioners wishing to improve their practice and contribute to scholarship relating to language pedagogy.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Data Collection

Appendix A.1. Timeline

Dates	Activity	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5
Initial study	Sent out Survey.	30/11/2017: interview				14/11/2017: Interview with J. Individual online open-question questionnaires with 2 teachers
		Survey			Survey	
Sept. 2018	Initiated 2 eTwinning projects: one focusing on language (Teach2Learn) and one on content (SDGs)					
Oct. 2018	PR05					
Nov. 2018	Sent out questionnaires					
Dec. 2018						
Jan. 2019	PR06					
Feb. 2019		6 th : Interview with 2C				
		14 th : Interview with 2C				
		20 th : (Interview done by themselves)				
March 2019		18 th : Interview with 2C				
		27 th : email				
April 2019	Joined a ready-made eTwinning project on the Solar system initiated by science teachers in Croatia. The initial reason for this was to use our new 3D printer (won in a competition) to make a 3D solar system together with the Physics teacher with one particular class from case 2. I had not expected to use this project for this enquiry, but the results were so important that I could not ignore it.					
			08 th : Interview with 2B			
			15 th : Interview with 4B			
May 2019		13 th : Interview with 2C	13 th : Interview with 2B		17 th : Interview with G.	
		27 th : Interview with 3C	22 nd : Interview with 4B			
						Individual online open-question questionnaire with myself
June 2019	PR07				10 th : Interview with M.	Individual online e open-question questionnaire with B.
					11 th : Interview with S.	Individual online open-question questionnaire with D.
July & Aug	Analysis					
Sept. 2019	PR08 (Sept. 2019)					
Total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ PR 09 (Feb. 2020) ◊ PR10 (May 2020) ◊ PR11 (July 2020); ◊ PR12 (Sep. 2020); ◊ Final thesis (Oct. 2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ 2 classes; ◊ 1 initial study face-to-face interview ◊ 7 face-to-face interviews; ◊ 21 essays; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ 2 classes; ◊ 4 interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Online open-question questionnaires answered by 57 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ 3 face-to-face interviews; ◊ 1 initial study face-to-face interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ 1 initial study face-to-face interview ◊ 3 Individual open-question questionnaires; ◊ 2 Individual open-question questionnaires collected from the initial study; ◊ Anonymous online open-questions questionnaire answered by 5 teachers; ◊ Feedback from projects answered by many teachers

Appendix A.2. Cases

Quintain		Data collected				Kinds of OCPs and platforms used			
Case	Description of case	Face to face Interviews	Online written interviews	Online open questionnaires	Essays	(Various platforms) Content OCPs with EFL teachers	(Twinspace) content OCPs with STEM teachers	(Twinspace) Language focused project	(Various platforms) Erasmus+
1	Students specialising in MFL	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
2	Students not specialising in MFL	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Students who are doing projects with me but live in different countries.			✓		✓		✓	
4	EFL teachers working in the same school as me.	✓							✓
5	Teachers who have done OCPs with me but work in other cities or countries, including myself.		✓	✓		✓		✓	

Appendix A.3. OCPs

OCP	Year & study	Platform	Cases	Type of project	Partners	Focus	Activities	Notes
SDGs: <i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge</i>	2017/18 Initial study	eTwinning WordPress; Loomio.com; Facebook; Twitter	1&3	Content with mainly EFL teachers	From other cities and countries	On the Sustainable Development Goals.	Students used English as a tool to: do research, record videos, communicate	Initiated after online discussion with various colleagues from past projects. Very successful attracting over 100 teachers and schools and therefore more than 1000 students from all over the world. Since eTwinning is open only to EU schools, Loomio.com and WordPress was used as communication platforms. The final product was an eBook, video and presentation (Zielonka and Fearn, 2018).
EU: <i>Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning</i>	2017/18 Initial study	eTwinning	1&3	Content with mainly EFL teachers	Mainly Italian schools but also Croatia and Turkey	On the European Union	with Skype or similar communication applications, write articles, letters and essays make	A project on the EU initiated by a special need's teacher in my school and myself with the intention of making it an interdisciplinary school project. This never happened but I met new colleagues from other parts of Italy and other EU countries and the project was a success anyway. The final products were videos and an eBook (Fearn, 2018).
Erasmus: <i>SOS-Water Sources are Alarming</i>	2017/19 Main study	Erasmus (and eTwinning)	1	Content with EFL and STEM teachers. Includes Intercultural exchange	Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania and Turkey	On the theme of water e.g. the arts, literature, science, religion etc	quizzes and games to play with each other, make presentations, make eBooks, websites, blogs etc	These were Erasmus plus projects and the transnational mobility sessions over-shone the OCP ones. However, all people in the school where the researcher was working were involved to some extent. These projects were more visible than the others, but were much more work for the researcher as the coordinator. The final products were eBooks (Fearn and Hessová, 2019; Fearn and Salkauskiene, 2019).
Erasmus: <i>Take Stereotyping out of Your Life</i>	2017/19 Main study	Erasmus (and eTwinning)	1 & 2	Content with mainly EFL teachers. Includes Intercultural exchange	Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Romania and Turkey	On the theme of stereotyping e.g. the arts, literature, music, religion, social science etc		
SDGs 2: <i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819</i>	2018/19 Main study	eTwinning WordPress; Microsoft Teams; Facebook; Twitter	1, 2 & 3	Content with mainly EFL teachers	From other cities and countries	On the Sustainable Development Goals. A progression from last year due to large request from partners.		This was the second year of the above project, this year reaching almost 200 teachers and schools internationally. The final product is a Wakelet presentation (Zielonka and Fearn, 2019).
Language: <i>Teach to Learn</i>	2018/19 Main study	eTwinning	1,2 & 3	Language focused with EFL teachers	Italy, Turkey, Croatia.	On vocabulary and grammar		I created this project as a result of my initial study and focused on language rather than content. Students made games and quizzes with the grammar and vocabulary they learnt. The final product was a website made with Weebly (Fearn, 2019).
Solar System: <i>Solar System 7.0</i>	2018/19 Main study	eTwinning	2	Content with STEM teachers	Croatia and Italy	On the Solar system – the arts, literature and physics.		The physics teacher and I wanted to work together in order to use the 3D printer our school had recently was Students did research, made presentations, used Sketchup, made a scale model of the solar-system which is now hanging in the school entrance hall (Šojat and Jukić, 2019).

Appendix A.4. OCP Locations



Appendix A.5. Cases, references, dates and notes

Case	Reference	Participants
One	C1S, Group-Interview 1, 30/11/2017.	Initial study. Five 15/16-year-old students one boy and four girls.
	C1S, Group Interview 2, 06/02/2019.	Two 15/16-year-old students: a boy and a girl.
	C1S, Individual-Interview 3, 14/2/2019.	One 15/16-year-old girl.
	C1S, Group-Interview 4, 20/02/2019.	Five 15/16-year-old students on their own, without me.
	C1S, Group-Interview 5, 18/02/2019.	Three 15/16-year-old girls.
	C1S, Group-Interview 6, 03/04/2019.	Four 15/16-year-old students: one boy and three girls.
	C1S, Group-Interview 7, 13/05/2019.	Four 15/16-year-old students, 2 boys and two girls.
	C1S, Group-Interview 8, 27/05/2019.	Eight 16/17-year-old girls.
	C1S, emails, 27/03/2019.	Twenty-one emails.
Two	C2S, Group-Interview 1, 08/04/2019.	Three 15/16-year-old girls
	C2S, Group-Interview 2, 15/04/2019.	Six 17/18-year-old girls
	C2S, Group-Interview 3, 13/ 05/2019.	Eight 15/16-year-old students: three boys and five girls.
	C2S, Group-Interview 4, 22/05/2019.	Eight 17/18-year-old students: two boys and six girls
Three	C3S, Online Open-Question Survey, 2019.	Fifty-seven students aged between 14 to 18 years old.
Four	C4T, Individual-Interview 1, 17/05/2019.	EFL teacher with five years EFL experience in secondary schools
	C4T, Individual-Interview 2, 10/06/2019.	EFL teacher with no experience in secondary schools but 30 years in private language schools and as a Cambridge assessment examiner.
	C4T, Individual-Interview 3, 11/06/2019.	EFL teacher with about eighteen years EFL experience in secondary schools.
Five	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 1, 05/2018.	Successful and experienced Polish EFL teacher with many years secondary school experience in Norway and a Varkey Global Teacher finalist.
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 2, 05/2018.	Successful and experienced Swedish EFL teacher with many years secondary school experience in Sweden.
	C5T, Individual-Interview 3, 14/11/2018.	An Italian EFL teacher with just two years' experience.
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 4, 05/2019.	The researcher: thirty years' EFL experience in secondary schools in South Italy.
	C5T, Online Open-Question Survey, 05/2019	Answers from five teachers residing in various international schools.
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 5, 06/2019.	Successful and experienced Polish EFL teacher with many years secondary school experience in Norway and a Varkey Global Teacher finalist.
	C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 6, 06/2019	An Italian teacher with just a few years' experience teaching EFL in secondary schools and teaching in the north of Italy.

Appendix A.6. C2S students with SEN

Group interview	Severe cognitive impairment	Learning difficulties	Had repeated years
Group-interview 1			1 girl
Group-interview 2	1 girl	1 boy	
Group-interview 3		1 girl	1 girl
Group-interview 4		1 boy 1 girl	1 girl
Total	1	4	3

Appendix B. Data

Appendix B.1. An example of a face-to-face transcript (C2S, Group-Interview 1,

08/04/2019)

Case-two, Interview 1, 08/04/2019

Alice, Lorena and Angela (Pseudonyms)

- Me: First of all, I'd like to hear your stories. Do you like English?
- All 3 all of them say yes
- Me: So, I'm very lucky that you like English and I'd like to know your stories what happened to you in your life that made you like English
- Alice: In my school history we've been very unlucky when we were in the primary school, we used to change English teachers all the time even in the same year and each time a new ticket teacher came we begin everything all over again. In the first year of junior school we had a good teacher. In the second year too, and in the third year we had another teacher although we've always been unlucky because we have always changed English teachers and they've not always been good.
- Me: Have you always been one of the best in your class in English?
- Alice: Yeah, I think so
- Me: So even though you've been unlucky in English you are good, so why do you think that is?
- Lorena: It depends a lot of the teachers.
- Alice: Yes, very much so, there are some teachers who don't care if you're in difficulty instead there are some who do care.
- Me: And me so even though you've had all these difficulties you're still good in English and you still like it?
- Alice: Yes, it's a beautiful language in its useful we need it
- Me: And you Lorena?
- Lorena: Instead in my past, even in my junior school I've never been happy in my English classes. I didn't have high marks. in fact, they were very low, but this depended on the teachers. I think that they didn't care, and they didn't try to help me get higher marks so

I never I was never happy for the teacher. And when we came to the high school, I saw that my marks were higher, so I was happy with the with the way things were going and for the teachers because I felt happy even with you and with the other teacher

Me: So, you mean they had different ways of teaching? you could you explain that please?

Lorena: For example, in the oral part I had 6 or 7/10 but the written part I used to get 2/10.

Me: What kind of test did they give you?

Lorena: Grammar with the written part I got very low marks not only because I didn't like the method used by the teacher use but also because I was unable to understand what she was talking about. Now I can understand more but I couldn't before.

Me: So, what kind of method did she use?

Lorena: She used lots of grammar and everything was all mixed together and so it was too much too many arguments altogether in each test so maybe if I studied one, I couldn't do the others. But not just me, nearly all the class.

Me: And you Angela?

Angela: In my past me and English didn't get on very well but didn't get on very well. I always used to get bad marks in both oral and written most of all because I wasn't unable to understand the language and also for the teacher. I didn't like her very much and it wasn't just one teacher as I had a different teacher and I was unable to get good marks.

Me: Why didn't you get on well with them?

Angela: It was everything, the method of teaching, the way the tests were organized. In fact she put lots of arguments and you was unable to answer them properly. With the oral part the teacher gave us at a piece of paper that we had to memorise and repeat. If you couldn't remember the words, we would get a low mark.

Me: So, it was all memory?

Angela: Yes, and in the junior school the teacher would make us stand by the desk by the blackboard standing up and she would ask us questions about the grammar and about that about history in English. This was good because I didn't understand the method of the teacher.

Me: Instead what about the twinning project that we do? Do you like these projects?

All: all of them say yes

Me: What do you think about doing the projects?

Alice: I think it's a new way of learning it's a new way of learning and I think it catches people's attention even those people who don't like English these people I see them much more interested in the lesson. Yes, it's a new thing and it's a new thing and we enjoy doing it.

Me: What have you learnt in English by doing these projects?

Lorena: For example, making quizzes. It's a way of learning better and you do it more happily and something that you learn something you always learn.

Alice: It's not boring it was more difficult in the middle school. English was much more difficult. With this kind of approach, it's much easier time passes quickly you learn that you learn things without trying.

Angela: Although you work happily and even though it's easy, you still learn stuff

Me: Is there something that you don't like about it? Is something difficult for you?

Alice: Computer programs, how to get into the website how to enter Twinspace, yeah but then you get used to it and it's easy. Internets a bit slow and it gets blocked but I've never had a problem.

Me: Could you all explain one computer one activity that you did? Imagine that somebody is here who doesn't know what you've done could you explain to them?

Alice: Yes, we did the simple past and here with all questions on this arguments and different options put in the correct one with pictures with the slides and then we did this quiz and we learnt the grammar even because we used the verbs

Lorena: I liked the quiz and we enjoyed doing the logo and we voted for the best one I like doing that.

Me: What about as far as English is concerned?

Lorena: In English, and the website was English and then I liked the project. I like doing the project with it.

Angela: I worked with Lorena, the present continuous where I spoke on Flipgrid it was useful to be able to speak in front of the telephone and also in front of everybody

Me: In your opinion, should every teacher especially the English teachers do projects like this one?

All 3 all of them said yes

Lorena: Maybe in subjects where we have the most difficulty

Alice: I think we should also have a mark in these subjects with these projects.

Me: Could you tell me anything else?

Alice: Because it's on a new experience and extra experience it's not an ordinary lesson and it's useful for students to have problems. Not like when teachers speak and speak and speak and they get boring and it's a change in the routine that we do all the time. Even shy people that way they are able to open up. I think it's something useful like even the theatre and it's a way of improving people.

Me: Why do you think other teachers don't do eTwinning?

Alice: Perhaps they think it is a waste of time

Me: What do you think they are doing which is so important?

Alice: Yes, perhaps about the program, about the curriculum they think that the lesson should still be based around the book and interrogations and I think that they completely wrong because people can only be a concentrated for a short time. In these projects we work harder and it's a way to relax to when we do it. But we wanted to do it and not leave. Also, we work in groups and one day when we work in a company, we need to be able to work in groups and even in life we need to speak to each other we need to get on together. I think it's important.

Me: What about Technology what do you think about technology?

Alice: Some of my teachers are scared of it and they feel they might lose control of the class

Me: Maybe young teachers should be able to do it.

Lorena: Mr Pxxxxxx uses the computer and he and it made us do a project. He works with the computer.

Me: What do you think about the different projects then one is done in the classroom to one with other classes in other parts of Italy or in the world?

All 3: This project is much more fun

Angela: I think we need to speak more at school oh yeah obviously grammar is important but if you can study grammar you forget it but when you speak you remember it. We don't usually speak at school. We don't speak much in French only in interrogations.

Alice: My mum is French, but we never speak in French, but I've been asking her to speak to me lately and when she speaks and when you speak to me in English I can understand and I can even answer it's different.

Lorena: My brother does the Linguistico and my grandmother is French, and he speaks to her in French. I don't know I don't think I've got good enough language basis. I understand them and I understand the films but I have difficulty speaking. I think at school we should do more conversational conversation. Grammar is important but we need to speak.

Angela: We could even practice between classes and then when we do speak to foreign people, we would be better at it.

Me: That's a really good idea! I've never thought of that before!

Example summary from C4T.

Case 4: Summary

Positive aspects

Of course, for example, I had a really good class, in the school, some years ago and they improved really, their vocabulary, because they had a project about traditions and all the legends and so they had a chance to enrich their vocabulary; but that was a brilliant class.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

So, what is it that you want to teach your students?

Teacher:

Well in my opinion, first of all they should improve their conversation, so I don't really care about grammar mistakes. They need to enforce the self-confidence because I believe we all make mistakes, even in our mother-tongue. So, I think that these projects are useful to make students feel more self-confident but of course they are also enlarge vocabulary especially if the project is about a specific content, for example a historical event, traditions, recipes and that sort of thing.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

I realised it can be very effective in some cases because as I told you before,

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

I believe that this kind of project can really increase motivation and if they increase their motivation, then they will even increase their learning skills, even grammar.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Actually there are really beneficial for the for the students, primarily, obviously, because instead of just using the simple textbook, they go online, they do what they have to do on the computer. Search for the words on day learn also new words that they might have not learned from the text itself. And I think this is beneficial. Another point is also the use of the computer.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Ah, a lot of the students don't know how to use the computer very well. So this is just another incentive for them to be able to practice learning something and then put it to good use.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Me

do you think something like this should be introduced into the curriculum. Do you think that teachers should be made to do this or not yes

yes I think it would be good and all spheres.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Instead, for the students they are very beautiful because they open their horizons. Even if it seems as though they don't learn much, but they are projects that stay with them for a long time, like lifelong learning projects that teach lifelong skills that will last forever

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

yes for the teachers too, even if the teachers have to work more than they would if they just do traditional lessons. It's a way of growing also because you share your experience with that your colleagues; both good and bad experiences, for example, I might think I'm doing something well but then I see a colleague and I can learn from them or they can learn from me too.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

sometimes it might seem as though they don't learn much because it takes time away from their traditional lessons, but then at the same time, I think they remember it more. So, for both the students and for the teachers, they provide lifelong skills.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Despite the fact that it seems as if the students miss out on school-work, but I've seen that with Erasmus projects, although they don't learn that much English, they become more open-minded.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

With the Erasmus projects I started easier even if there is a lot more work to do

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

students become more open-minded (self-confident) about speaking. They are not so afraid of making mistakes – she believes that they speak to each other more happily than when they speak to us and even that they have their own 'teenager' language and that it is important that they cultivate this outside of the classroom;

Source: my notes

G. says you don't need fantastic tools to do an OCP;

Source: my notes

G. notices that the most difficult project was the most successful. This is interesting;

Source: my notes

- *Students don't need high levels of technology, but they do need to know language we*
- *OCPs help increase motivation;*

Source: my notes

negative aspects

When I tried to start a new project with a weaker class but it was a total mess because probably they had no abilities to use.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

in some classes it is just a mess. It's just a way of having an hour break.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

did you have any other difficulties?

Lena

sometimes they can't take advantage they say are we going to the lab we're not going to do anything, so we need to have to be a little bit stricter.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

some of them are very sly. Even Claudio. I still haven't understood him.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

well they take a lot of organisation and even outside work hours they take a lot of organisation and preparation and a lot of work

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

And what about difficult students for example, our section B?

(Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Well this is a difficult topic. For example, in a difficult class I did a work of tutoring because I think that working together, they do more. But I also noticed that they were wasting time because the good students were working but the lazy ones weren't doing anything, so I had to interrupt them and doing my traditional lessons.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

presumptions

I must say that I have a changeable opinion, in the sense that for example, for the good classes it has been a way to improve the students, to learn something new. But for weaker classes the situation was quite different because they thought it was just a way to have an hour break and so it wasn't affective. It was very effective with good classes but only with good classes.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Because I have the first years in the language school and I believe that in the first years they have to improve their vocabulary, but above all, they need to learn grammar. Grammar is important at the beginning of high school in my opinion. It is a kind of, you know from that starting point they can feel more confident because they can learn the timeline, I mean when they know the tenses, so I believe that in the first year grammar is crucial. Maybe the second part of the high school maybe next year I can start a new project.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Teacher:

No, I don't think that every student can do that, and I believe it is the same as online community projects, we need really good students, not good students, but motivated students. It depends on motivation because it's crucial point is motivation.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Well, as for the eTwinning project, I try to convey the idea of the importance of facing this kind of challenge, because at the beginning students were quite reluctant. They were not so sure about the effectiveness of this project, while it was completely different in the other case asked for the 'Intercultura' projects. One of my students obliged the school to find a project for her because she really wanted to go, she really wanted to go to another country, but she was an incredible, incredible young lady. Now she is studying in London she is incredible.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Teacher:

Of course, we went to the information technology laboratory, but we started to manage even in the classroom because we had the interactive white-board. You don't need actually such incredible materials to run a project, you just need motivation.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

No, not high levels of technology skills, but language skills. But they need to master the language, of course they can make some mistakes but the idea needs to be conveyed.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

No, no, well Dylan for example, But this is it though he has problems staying sitting down so this should be a good way to teach him to relax and to start a job and then complete it.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

And this is why I say this is traditional teaching isn't very good, you can't just do that continually but you have to do a variety of things, activities within the classroom may

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

especially with students like these who find it difficult to learn grammar in any language, even their own sometimes. Do you think we should insist?

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

well I think that you have to because it falls into the category let's take some of the students from the past, for example, so from what I've seen from the past students grow after a while they become aware of what they are doing it takes a long time for some of them. maybe it comes out after they finish school. So, a good knowledge of even just the simple things of grammar is essential because maybe that will bring them in to do in English again in the future, whereas if they are not good in a subject they abandon it automatically and then never pick it up again so you always need to give them a little light at the end of the tunnel just to give them that hope.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

another question I wanted to ask you, so let me summarise what you've said; so grammar is important and you have to adapt your teaching to their students even if they only learn a little bit or even if they don't learn anything, as long as they feel they can learn in the future; they need to have hope.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Lena

Yes, I understand what you mean. For example, motorcycles? You need to do a survey to see what they like to know about so they have an opportunity, for example::, to use all the grammar aspects, maybe, I don't know; the present simple and simple past positions that's a good idea and it being fun although towards the certification. why not? they should be able to get a certification

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

yes but they liked researching and speaking about vocabulary and researching it. But instead of having just copy and paste they should do a little bit more in depth.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

So sometimes it might seem as though they don't learn much because it takes time away from their traditional lessons, but then at the same time, I think they remember it more.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

So for both the students and for the teachers, they provide lifelong skills.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

I think that's because they are speaking to their peers and not adults. Not only that but among peers they understand each other better. They have their own language.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Maybe also because I wasn't very good with technology. I had problems with ITC, now I haven't though because I've understood how to use technology at home on my own, so I feel better about these things. Even with virtual classes etcetera. At first, you think, oh dear, what if a kid asks me something and I don't know what to do? Instead now, I am ok. Perhaps it's a question of being ready, with Internet and to evaluate many things.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

· she says it's good for both high and low achievers

Source: my notes

opinions for teachers

Yes, it was great for me because I had a chance to meet 'virtually' colleagues from other countries and to know something more about the Polish traditions or also the Turkish traditions as well. And so it was great. it was a way to face the situation, it was quite challenging, quite a daunting, it was a challenge for me because I didn't realise that it's not that simple to run a situation like this one.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Teacher:

Of course, also how to face, you know I acquired some soft skills, for example how to mediate in complicated situations. Probably that's the most important one how to mediate in different situations.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

it's fun and you can enjoy seeing new things and learning new things.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

lots of work for teachers (not wrong);

Source: my notes

· G. likes Intercultura but believes that it is only for good students – this is the same for OCPs;

· Teachers need to believe in what they do that is why G. 's OCPs students were unsure about OCPs and motivated about Intercultura;

Source: my notes

opinions for students

Well, I believe that they can be really effective and they can help young students to improve their knowledge of languages and I also believe that before doing these types of activities students have to have good language skills and also skills regarding relationships and those sorts of things, so I believe so it's not that easy. So I don't think that every class can afford these types of activities.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Well, as for the eTwinning project, I try to convey the idea of the importance of facing this kind of challenge, because at the beginning students were quite reluctant. They were not so sure about the effectiveness of this project, while it was completely different in the other case asked for the 'Intercultura' projects. One of my students obliged the school to find a project for her because she really wanted to go, she really wanted to go to another country, but she was an incredible, incredible young lady. Now she is studying in London she is incredible.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Actually there are really beneficial for the for the students, primarily, obviously, because instead of just using the simple textbook, they go online, they do what they have to do on the computer. Search for the words on day learn also new words that they might have not learned from the text itself. And I think this is beneficial. Another point is also the use of the computer.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Ah, a lot of the students don't know how to use the computer very well. So

This is just another incentive for them to be able to practice learning something and then put it to good use.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

But I don't really appreciate just the traditional teaching. Because I think teaching grasps a lot of other things and, this is another way of teaching, which is very good. So I'm not all against traditional teaching. But I'm also in favor of other things that have helped the students learn new things.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

special education students like Antonio. I must say that it would certainly help him but I have to say because I wasn't here from September And I came in October it should've been reinforced again what and why he was doing these games - he didn't understand totally. But he loved it, he loved it although he was absent for a long time but it gave him the ability to do some skills on the computer may he was good with the games. Yes, yes and I think this should've been reinforced even more

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

what do you think you might learn

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

well the actual use of the computer itself and then maybe putting into practice everything that goes on online I also think you can learn from other people when you did those games online. They remained impressed on the students' minds: 'We played the game with the Bologna students' because when they confront with other people it would be nice to then be face-to-face in real life so they could remember

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

I know Dylan loves rap and that's why he knows lots of words

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

n their learning they're not so shy when they speak and not so worried about making mistakes. Even if they make mistakes, they speak anyway. They don't usually do this because in the classroom doing traditional lessons, they are shy of the teacher who is assessing them (and this is true because we have to do this), but often they are shy in front of their friends too incase they might laugh at them or if they have better pronunciation than them et cetera. Instead, after Erasmus, they speak much more fluently, whether they speak well or not.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

I think that's because they are speaking to their peers and not adults. Not only that but among peers they understand each other better. They have their own language.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Me

So you think that it's important that they do this outside the class?

(Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Yes, because in the class they're scared of being judged or assessed whereas speaking outside the classroom they relax and by relaxing, they learn. I have an example of a student in the third year who is one of the most negative students as far as English is concerned. She says she can't write and she won't speak, instead I heard her speaking to people on the Erasmus program, and she had no problems about speaking to her peers, so outside the classroom they communicate much better.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Do you think these projects are better for good students and not so good for students with difficulties?

(Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

I think for both because the good students test what they know and show off how good they are and they can improve and reach a high level of English. Instead for the student with more difficulties it can be like a language gymnasium where they can practice

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

as far as the students are concerned, they work really well, you know making presentations making posters writing summaries and reports. They do these things happily whereas if I had asked them to do a traditional essay, about anything, I would have had to wait three years for them to get it back to me.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

If it's a nice class it's easy, because they are predisposed towards learning languages. There are some students who seem to do everything on their own instead there are other ones which need us they need help so with difficult classes so you have to vary your approach, sometimes using videos, sometimes a song and sometimes by doing group work.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

A teacher who doesn't like using technology very much sees the benefit of using these projects. Interestingly, she thinks that the SEN boy would have benefitted more if he had understood better the reason why he was doing these projects, but she didn't get the opportunity;

Source: my notes

· (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019) says grammar is important and you have to adapt your teaching to their students even if they only learn a little bit or even if they don't learn anything, as long as they feel they can learn in the future; they need to have hope;

Source: my notes

(Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019) believes that students shouldn't do OCPs unless they already have a good command of the language in question;

Source: my notes

G. also believes OCPs help students' self-confidence;

Source: my notes

· G. believes that grammar is the most important thing for new EFL students to learn;

Source: my notes

EFL

Well, I believe that they can be really effective and they can help young students to improve their knowledge of languages and I also believe that before doing these types of activities students have to have good language skills and also skills regarding relationships and those sorts of things, so I believe so it's not that easy. So I don't think that every class can afford these types of activities

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

So I think they can improve they can enlarge the vocabulary, also their fluency. They can improve their fluency actually if they have a Skype interview or a Skype conversation. But above all, the soft skills were improved by students for example to respects roles, to respect other people first of all. Yes.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Well, the first eTwinning project was a really simple project actually, it was about exchanging greetings cards for Easter, for Christmas. It was just away to know different cultures students so they exchanged Facebook addresses and they both started communicating outside from school, so it was a way of improving language.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

they exchanged recipes so that it used a particular kind of language, for example giving instructions to follow

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Another project, probably the most interesting was about traditions and cultures and about traditions myths and legends and so we discovered a lot of Italian traditions and legends and those of some other countries and the common language was English of course. The students really liked it. The funny thing is that the most complicated project was the most interesting one, the one about traditions was the most popular. But then it was an excellent class. While the other projects were for weaker classes.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

No, not high levels of technology skills, but language skills. But they need to master the language, of course they can make some mistakes but the idea needs to be conveyed.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

I believe that this kind of project can really increase motivation and if they increase their motivation, then they will even increase their learning skills, even grammar.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

well you know with some of the students that I have from middle school, I say to them next year you're not going to start English again but you're going to start at the second level because the book that they have is mixed with both levels the first and second but I think that for some students it's useless doing that; to compare simple present and the present continuous, they can't. So the simpler it is the better it is but this is a problem for examples sheets of paper on the blackboard all the old method for used to do reading out, why? why do use this? how can you use this? But it's time-consuming, but that's a good strategy, and then after you came to present simple and present continuous what is the different between the two? and getting them to do posters and put them on the wall.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

This is why I over the year my year is my Canadian has changed. Yes it has it's become a little bit of everything and also my teaching method has changed, because I've had to adapt to students and you have to be on your toes.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

yes that's right You see what you do with the reading, and then afterwards, when you get them to translate, I know we were not supposed to do that but you have to do that. I do that at home to with the students because you have to understand that they have understood because also that is important for the Cambridge certificate 'intonation' I tell them. What do you think? is she happy? is she angry? because it's difficult, it's very difficult. and then you have to get them to write they get them to write. Writing is very important. All the four abilities always have to be present

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

but actually they all go hand-in-hand because when they learn vocabulary they put it to you so that was fantastic game as a matter of fact with Antonio I even did it in French me yeah we did

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Lena

yeah we did, yes he was it was visible when he saw the picture in the words and the writing aspects when they write about something. And they and you need to give them a good guideline to follow. as long as they've got a good guidelines are followed example when I taught Trinity exams, that's what I did And then I would correct it and gave them more questions so it is a continuous thing even that is a good aspect with storytelling and even if they start with just a paragraph you give them other questions other tips other clues and they continue the story which would be good too. I like the games at the end they had to show what they learned a little bit more targeted just for them because those games were made by all of the groups.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

English is the most common language used as a vehicle for these projects.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Despite the fact that it seems as if the students miss out on school work, but I've seen that with Erasmus projects, although they don't learn that much English, they become more open-minded.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

In their learning they're not so shy when they speak and not so worried about making mistakes. Even if they make mistakes, they speak anyway.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

with foreign peers they have to speak in English.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

· she thinks both OCPs with communication activities and grammar lessons are important: 'you need both';

Source: my notes

difficulties

But for weaker classes the situation was quite different because they thought it was just a way to have an hour break and so it wasn't affective. It was very effective with good classes but only with good classes.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Teacher:

The only problem I had was time because I had to do a lot of things in just three hours so if I devoted one hour a week to these projects, that time was actually stolen from another activity which was important for the English syllabus. That's a problem that I had and that's why I hesitate before starting projects the crucial point is that we need more hours. The Italian school system needs more language hours especially English.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

should say that with the computer it becomes a little bit more difficult,

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

special education students like Antonio. I must say that it would certainly help him but I have to say because I wasn't here from September And I came in October it should've been reinforced again what and why he was doing these games - he didn't understand totally. But he loved it, he loved it although he was absent for a long time but it gave him the ability to do some skills on the computer may he was good with the games. Yes, yes and I think this should've been reinforced even more

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

he did some of them but not all of them, because it seems strange but he knows a lot of words. He's lazy and he doesn't come out with the language that maybe he knows the words

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

in class it's much more difficult. It's impossible to make a gymnasium where they can speak. Either it's me who's speaking or it's them who asks me questions and it's more likely they will ask the questions in Italian. Instead with foreign peers they have to speak in English.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Have you ever had any had any problems?

(Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

No. As a teacher no. Maybe at the beginning I was a bit lazy and that depends on your character. I love innovation and change but I am also a bit lazy.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

o, the only difficulty is a balancing the ordinary work you have to do with organisation.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

There are some students who seem to do everything on their own instead there are other ones which need us they need help so with difficult classes so you have to vary your approach, sometimes using videos, sometimes a song and sometimes by doing group work.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

· lots of work for teachers (not wrong);

Source: my notes

· she was lazy to begin with but found out that doing OCPs is fun;

Source: my notes

time

Are you doing a project at the moment?

Teacher:

No, not at the moment. I was thinking of starting a new project but probably next year now because I had a good class last year but it was the final year of school and it was quite complicated because we have just three hours of language, you know in Italy. That's a problem you know, I believe Italian classes foreign language classes should have more than three hours in our school systems. I believe that they should be at least five hours so we can do other activities and make students become fluent, to master the language because they can't master the language with just three hours.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Teacher:

The only problem I had was time because I had to do a lot of things in just three hours so if I devoted one hour a week to these projects, that time was actually stolen from another activity which was important for the English syllabus. That's a problem that I had and that's why I hesitate before starting projects the crucial point is that we need more hours. The Italian school system needs more language hours especially English.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

In my opinion, what I like doing? I don't really do a lot of computer teaching, because I do some other types of projects. So it limits my time. My time is limited.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Yeah, well, it's a little difficult to explain. Plenty, because you know when I do projects it's only twenty hours. In that 20 hours, if I only occupy ten then I don't train them for the examination also projects

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Oh, well, They do, they do, but for me to use it in class when I've only got one hour. Yeah, it's a little difficult.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

me

yes, so we need to work more

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

yes, we need to work more

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

The negative aspects it's time-wise.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

as far as teaching is concerned do you think these projects might help teachers to learn to teach better you've got lots of experience but what about yourself that you think you might learn anything

Lena

yes I certainly would, given time I think I would.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

school shouldn't be a rush

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

Lena

very useful. Also repeating over again just like you would with a very small children writing from Italian into English it's very difficult because they listen to the words they hear the sounds like they do in Italian but that is not good. So what do you do? in that case you get them to write five times the words; you get them to do anagram; fill in the spaces like cloze and then fill in the gap see all of the things but all of these things take lots of time.

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

yeah it's always time we should spend more time doing meetings

Source: (Case-four interview 2, 10/06/2019)

the only difficulty is a balancing the ordinary work you have to do with organisation.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Why do you think you've never done an eTwinning project?

(Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Maybe because I need time, but not because I'm against them, not at all. I would like to do them. It's a promise I've made myself. Also, because I'd like to do it with the first years but when I get a

first year, I always spend too long trying to let them catch up with each other and I have never found the right time.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

history

You know, I took part in a lecture 10 years ago and it sounded quite interesting and so it was a kind of challenge. I wanted to try and I realised it can be very effective in some cases because as I told you before, in some classes it is just a mess. It's just a way of having an hour break.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

So, as far as my own experiences as a student at school....., I wasn't taught English at school because the teacher didn't speak English in class, she made us do exercises and I can't even remember any of my lessons at school, probably because we didn't do any. Well the teaching methodology has changed from being a traditional grammar approach to a communicative approach.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

(Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

Reading, listening and doing exercises. I never went abroad much during my University years because you didn't in the past. Now students can go abroad with programmes such as Erasmus. However, the language was there, inside me, I learnt it well at University, I learnt it well and they taught it well. However, then you need to learn how to use it. To do that I had to go abroad. Nowadays students have more advantages they travel they have mother-tongue teachers it's easier for them.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

classes and communities

I think the important thing is to see what kind of class you've got when you choose your methods, so when you've got certain classes you can do all sorts of methodologies. For example, the flipped classroom instead there are other classes who really want a traditional lesson both with grammar and literature. For example, I've got classes that do good research with the literature instead I've got other classes that are more lazy for example they want me to explain things to them, they tell me that I haven't explained things to them so I tell them to read about it.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

So it depends, I think you need both; a traditional lesson maybe not traditional but where you explain things to them.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

You need Internet all the time because it solves many problems. You can use it for all sorts of things, but we also need to give value to communication by doing communicative lessons.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

We need both. It's true that you shouldn't be fossilised on just grammar and writing but then if you want to do a certification is you need these things; the language in the true sense of the word, so you need balance. We need to be good at everything.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

If it's a nice class it's easy, because they are predisposed towards learning languages. There are some students who seem to do everything on their own instead there are other ones which need us they need help so with difficult classes so you have to vary your approach, sometimes using videos, sometimes a song and sometimes by doing group work.

Source: (Case-four interview 3, 11/06/2019)

· students become more open-minded (self-confident) about speaking. They are not so afraid of making mistakes – she believes that they speak to each other more happily than when they speak to us and even that they have their own 'teenager' language and that it is important that they cultivate this outside of the classroom;

Source: my notes

description

Well, the first eTwinning project was a really simple project actually, it was about exchanging greetings cards for Easter, for Christmas. It was just away to know different cultures students so they exchanged Facebook addresses and they both started communicating outside from school, so it was a way of improving language. While another project was about cookery. Yes, they exchanged recipes so that it used a particular kind of language, for example giving instructions to follow. Another project, probably the most interesting was about traditions and cultures and about traditions myths and legends and so we discovered a lot of Italian traditions and legends and those of some other countries and the common language was English of course. The students really liked it. The funny thing is that the most complicated project was the most interesting one, the one about traditions was the most popular. But then it was an excellent class. While the other projects were for weaker classes.

Source: (Case-four interview 1, 17/05/2019)

Appendix B.2. C3S: Anonymous online open-questioned questionnaires.

eTwinning projects are group project. we contribute to communication with foreign countries. Sometimes we make video chat with foreign partners so we can contact each other and make projects , activities etc. together
English Learning With Friends
Strengthening Language Competencies
Projects are activities which we prepared for improve our English. For example 'English Project'.
e-Twinning projects can help you to learning and practising english. In e-Twinning projects you can introduce to yourself, teach grammar, prepare the word lists and practise grammar and words.
they are collaboratives projects with foreing colleges
there are collaborative projects with students from other countries
the eTwinning projects are projects that we made with people from other places or communities.
They are projects done by several groups of people from different places to talk and bring awareness about a certain topic.
They are collective projects with students from other countries.
eTwinning projects are webs that are used by students of all places of the planet like for example our project.
These projects are works that make us reflect about our future and how we can help to improve it.
They help us understand what is going on on Earth.
These projects are helping to communicate with others countries and to make changes for our future together.
They are online projects that enable schools from different parts of the world to cooperate. One example would be the project about sustainable goals.
are projects to teach the objectives of sustainable development goals
eTwinning projects promote collaborative learning: students learn from each other, interact, communicate and thus feel responsible for their own learning.
Projects, communications
This community is way of exchanging ideas wit people from other cultures and learning more ways to make a better world. For example by live conferences with our mates from Turkey
Etwinning is a social network where we share the good things that we do to make the world a better place to live. We share projects related to the sustanable development goals.
This community is a way of exchanging ideas with people from other cultures and learning more ways to make a better world. For example by the letters we wrote to students from other countries.
It's projects made to help poorer places mainly.
A way of working on projects allthe world together
The etwinning projects are a way to interact with the rest of the world while being focused on a common objective .
With this projects we have learnt lots of interesting features and curiosities about many different countries and we also learn much new vocabulary and got in contact with new people
eTwinning projects are helps me to improve about my English.
we have done different activities in this project with people from other countries
It's a different way of learning English.
In the eTwinning projects we work on the goals to improve the planet before 2030, for example we have made some power point presentations or some videos
They are projects that want students to be more informed about daily issues around the world. for example, we've been talking about climate concepts and other stuff.
live sessions
eTwinning is about showing global problems
eTwinning is about connecting people through addressing some issues
learning English in practice
project give us a chance to meet people from another country
We were doing presentations , talking with people from other school
For example, we had G-session when we was talking with students from other countries.
We make a lot of task using our phones, minds and others
platform for staff (teachers, head teachers, librarians, etc.), working in a school in one of the European countries involved, to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and, in short, feel and be part of the most exciting learning community in Europe.
We can talk with the people from around the world
Mostly fun and connecting with people for example live sessions.
These are things like skype sessions, padlet exchanges .
They are projects that spread awareness about how can we help our planet and help learning english by for example making posters.
They are educational projects done together with some foreign partners, following some strict purposes.
We did Teach To Learn e-twinning project and it was very useful for us.We did different projects as well.
They are the projects that help us to improve our English through different activities.
E-twinning projects are useful for our lessons. Thanks to them our lessons became more enjoyable and effective.
They are enjoyable projects While doing these projects we learned new things.We met new friends from different cities and countries E-twinning projects are very useful
eTwinning is a free online community for schools from different countries. Thanks to E-twinning, we can find partners from different countries or cities and collaborate on projects. Furthermore we can enrich learning and improve our knowledge.
Thanks to E-twinning projects we can communicate, collaborate and develop projects on different topics.And this give us opportunity to learn new things.
E-Twinning projects promote collaborative learning: students learn from each other, interact, communicate and thus feel responsible for their learning.
Yes, I can.For example poverty,the quality.education..
I think its communicate with various nations as a citizen of the world with a global language and try to understand each other (like skype or hangouts videocalls).

Can you explain, using examples, how eTwinning projects (Online Community Projects) have helped you learn English?
We made video chat and different activities like writing story . And thanks to the eTwinning family we improved English language skills
I learned English through activities. For example Kahoot, taking a video.
We did English practises , prepared videos and Kahoot.
We prepared Kahoots, took videos and wrote some informations for meet some friends.
I prepared the videos and kahoot games about grammar and words, I read introductions about my frends, I wrote introduction about myself and I played the kahoot games about words and grammar.
making me practice my English with the videocalls
make video calls with other students
those projects help us at the time of talking
Because of the project I've had to write several essays and do several projects which are all in English. Making me a better writer. It has also helped speaking abilities because of the couple of times we've talked face to face with the other groups.
For example, the letters we wrote helped me learn some new vocabulary.
Nothing I already go to a classes of English
Making us writing letters and making presentations.
These projects help you to learn English because you need to be able to communicate with other students of other countries and, in order to do that, you have know English.
I was practising english a little bit
I had to make all the essays and presentations relating to this project in English and I've also talked in English with students from other countries. This has helped me with my English.
when we did a expolition of our project I had to search some information in english
Because I have speak with people of other countries, thanks of that I learned a lot of english.
I was speaking with other people in English
This project has help me a lot at the time of learning english, for example while I was writing letters or chatting with them by email.
It has helped us to learn new words to express ourselves in english.
I have improved my english thanks to this project, especialy with videocalls I have extended my vocabulary.
By chatting with other people, like Turkish students.
Honestly, I didn't learn a single thing
I improved my english while I was writing letters and speacking with our mates from the rest of europe
I learnt many vocabulary related to countries and economy, and also about woerld issues and solutions.
I practise my English with exercises and I can communicate people in English.
video calls with people from other countries have helped me learn English and meet more people
For example, making video calls with people from other countries.
The eTwinning projects they have helped me improve my English because during the whole project we have spoken in English, both written for example with the letters, and orally with the video calls
As everything written is in english, I've need to try to understand people we were talking to through this, so I've searched for some new words in english with the aim of understanding those students better.
I learnt a lot because of live sessions.
Presentations, G-Sessions
Mostly by g-sessions, because I've learned how to talk to other people using English
we can talk in English with students from other country
I can practice my english during our project activites
I'm less shy when I speaking English
For example we are talking with students from other countries.
We talk with students from difference countries.
I learn a lot of new things for example live session and I meet new people
We have to speak with another person and give us brave to speak
Live session improved my English, I was talking with people from other countries.
They have made speaking with other people a necessity so it helped being open with my english.
I had to read a lot of articles in english where I learned a lot of new words.
I learned some video making tools for Be The Change project, also for the same project I learned to use Google Docs.
We used this project in our English lesson.We prepared games and they were enjoyable.Our lessons became more enjoyable.While writing paragraphs we learned new vocabularies.
They helped me to improve my vocabulary and grammar most.Because in order to do our project missions we use dictionary most to learn unknown words.In writing activities I looked for some grammar structures.They were all useful.
E-twinning projects helped me to improve English skills.We did Writing,grammar,vocabulary exercises in this project and they were very effective.
They made our lessons effective.I improved my writing skills.I learned new vocabularies.
In this project we did different activities in English lessons.So it helped me to improve my English.I learned new vocabularies and I improved my writing skills.I also learned new grammar patterns.
I learned to prepare online games.I improved my grammar and vocabulary knowledge.
In projects we had to develop some games and write essays or poems.For this reason we had to learn new words and grammar patterns.We often interacted with our partners and these were useful for our English skills.
Yes, I can.I think this project is very important for learn to English.
Its definitely contribute my english, with videos, chats etc.

Can you explain, using examples, of any difficulties you have had or anything that you did not like about any eTwinning project (or Online Community Project) that you have done?

Maybe video live chat will be more often . Because of bad internet connection , sometimes can be connection problem
I did not have difficulty


I like all of details. There is no difficultie for me.
I haven't had any difficulties or nothing I didn't like.
I didn't have problems
I have not had any difficulties
the only problem was the time when we trie to communicate with other peoople
I personally loved everything. I just thought that sometimes we had some problems getting together because of timezones and freetime. I think it'd be nice to plan more days to get the groups together.
The only problem we had was that we did not have much time during the video calls
I think that this projects are too long for the time used

We should do more videocalls with other countries to get more information of how they try to improve
It was sometimes difficult to understand other people because we all have so different accents.
I hadn't difficulties.
We had problems talking with people from other countries. Sometimes the internet did not work or we did not understand each other.
the english because im not good speaker but i 've improved it
I think working in a group was the worst problem ,because I couldn't put sometimes my own ideas.
Communication with the people who don't know English
All was fantastic but I think that we should have done more conferences with our mates via skype.
The etwinning project is fantastic. However, I would put an option to facetime with others foreing users.
I haven't had any difficulties although I would have liked to do more video calls.
Some things are hard to understand.
I didn't really had any problems
All was perfect, but I think we shold do more live confrences.
In general i hadn't had any issue.

No I really enjoy with eTwinning project.
what has cost me the most was for example, the questions we had to ask the other classmates about their city schools... because we had very little time
Answering the questions with students from other countries has been the most difficult since we did not have time.
Sometimes I did not like it very much because I had to speak in English

I like everything about the project
One thing that i didn't like was G-sessions because
Biggest problem is probably searching for some actual information concerning the topic. Sometimes i was really stressed when I had to present the problem in front of my class
no difficulties
sometime during our g-session we had a lot of problems with conection
I did like everything
I didn't have any problem with eTwinning project.
I think I didn't have any problems or something I didn't like.
we had communication problems
I don't have any problems.
I didn't have any problems.
I didn't really have any major problems with the projects.
I had difficulty recording videos because of anxiety.
It was hard to have a good communication online, due to connection problems.
I didn't have any difficulties in this project.It was related to our subjects.I had much fun.
There is nothing that I didn't like in this project.
No,I didn't have any difficulties.
I didn't have any difficulties
I didn't have any difficulties
No,I didn't have any difficulties
Sometimes I had difficulties.For example while writing a poem I had difficulties.But our English teacher helped me.
Yes,i can .We are doing Skype with the other countrys.I like so much.
Online chatting gone wrong sometimes, because of the internet

2



An Enquiry into EFL and Online Community Projects in Secondary Schools: Questionnaire for teachers

4 responses

What are your thoughts on online community projects such as eTwinning? Can you give examples?

4 responses

First of all, for me as an English teacher, eTwinning is a place where my students can use the four language skills in a practical way so it boosts their motivation. Also, they learn numerous ICT tools and netiquette which is extremely important since they do not have many ICT lessons.

Online community projects can become Erasmus+ project with real meetings of different partners.

It's wonderful as it enables students and teachers from different European countries to work together.

Educational communities are very helpful, because they make students understand how useful English is, especially in my country where it is not used in the daily life.

Could you explain the effects that integrating eTwinning or any other Online Community Project in your EFL curriculum has had on your students' learning?

4 responses

As mentioned above, Students practise the four language skills. Besides, they develop critical thinking, digital literacy, they collaborate with others using English. They learn how to present their outcomes effectively.

Still, we do not use a lot online projects unless we post our Erasmus+ projects results.

You don't have to invent a situation so that they use the English language. The situations are in the project and they naturally use English because hardly anyone speaks their mother tongue

The students become more open minded, they understand the practical usage of their knowledge. These projects integrate all the skills in studying lifelong topics.

In your opinion, what is the role of eTwinning or Online Community Projects in your professional development? Could you give examples please?

4 responses

First of all, you can learn a lot from your project partners - I have developed professionally a lot because of that. Teachers exchange resources, tools, methods, motivating each other in this way. Furthermore, eTwinning offers different kinds of professional development: Learning Events, Online Seminars and courses - I often participate in them learning new things.

eTwinning helps teachers to gain some experience, study projects results and create something new.

it enriches our development because we are put in different situations and meet people with other practices who are open-minded. It's so enriching.

ETwinning opens a lot of opportunities in my professional development. It is useful to meet other people who have the same mind build and tasks as mine. It inspires and motivates to learn new teaching tools, web tools and to study more.

Could you explain any difficulties you have encountered? Could you give examples please?

3 responses

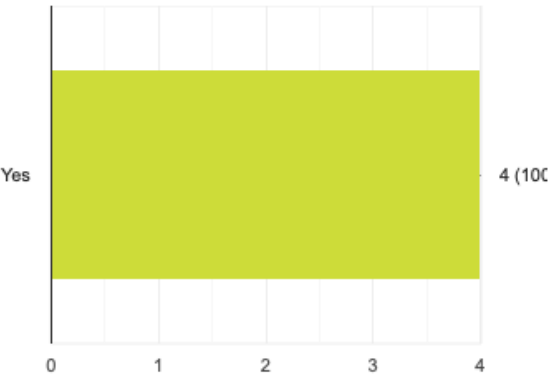
No difficulties

The difficulties can be the different timetables for online sessions and the lack of materials at some lesson hours at our school.

The only problem I still encounter is the connection one.

I agree that the information that I provide can be used for educational or research purposes, including publication

4 responses



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Google Forms

Appendix B.4. An example of an individual online open-question questionnaire with C5T (C5T, Online Open-Question Questionnaire 6, 06/2019)

OCP (Online Community Projects) can be any kind of project-based learning done in collaboration with other students in other classes or areas and using technology or Internet as a communication tool (in various forms).

- 1) What are your feelings about using OCPs to teach L2 as a secondary school English teacher?

I have been using OCPs to teach English for the past 7 years. Not only has it been one of the most engaging and effective teaching approaches, but it has also transformed my classroom practice. Right now I am not able to imagine teaching without OCPs. It is my strong belief that universities should teach future teachers-to-be on advantages of using OCPs in teaching English as a second or foreign language.

- 2) What are the difficulties of integrating OCPs into your curriculum?

I find my curriculum very flexible which makes it easy to integrate OCPs into my curriculum. My curriculum consists of four main subject areas: language learning, oral communication, written communication and culture, society and literature
<https://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Kompetansemaal/competence-aims-after-vg1-%E2%80%93-programmes-for-general-studies-and-vg2-%E2%80%93-vocational-education-programmes?lplang=http://data.udir.no/kl06/eng>.

I feel that it is very easy to match all the competence aims with project's aims.

- 3) How has participating in OCPs contributed to your professional development?

Enormously! Collaborating with teachers from all over the world makes it easy to learn about new tools, strategies, approaches and methods. If it had not been for OCPs, my teaching practice would be poorer and less varied. As a person who has been a project coordinator for many years, I have also shared my strategies and resources with other teachers. It is always a two-way process. Btw, it is also much easier to learn about new things, competitions, courses, webinars once there are many different teachers working together and collaborating on a regular basis.

- 4) What are your views on language learning? How do you think secondary school L2 students learn English?

Appendix B.5. An example of a C1S email

Hi Derek,

I'm very pleased to hear from you and to know that you're interested in my opinion on eTwinning. It's overall a very nice project because it gives you the chance to speak to people from different countries and to know more about their cultures. It also gives you the possibility to improve your English and learn new things.

Some of the projects we have done are Erasmus+, Be The Change Take The Challenge and Teach To Learn, and I'm being completely honest when I tell you that they all were amazing, because you get to interact with other nationalities, improve your skills and also worry about the environment. But everything has its pros and cons and eTwinning is not an exception: you meet other people and you make friends from different countries, which is fantastic, and you can improve your fluency and grammar in many different and fun ways. You talk about humanitarian issues and topics that concern all of us. But the internet connection is not always the best, actually, sometimes it's the worst and you can't do many things without a good internet connection, can you? That's the only bad thing I can find, which tells you just how good eTwinning truly is.

As I said, it's a great way to learn and improve your English, because it's not at all boring: you learn many new words and sayings, and I think that's a great way of expanding your English vocabulary. It's also very good for learning the language because you can express your opinions and you have a chance to speak a lot, so it also helps a lot if you're shy.

Even if it doesn't look like it, teachers have work to do too, they organise almost everything but they're always available to help and to answer questions. They could face some difficulties like the awful internet connection, or the schedule that they have to change completely, it's not easy with very short time. But there are also benefits, like changing their way of teaching and experiencing new things to help them with their work, so they don't always do the same thing over and over.

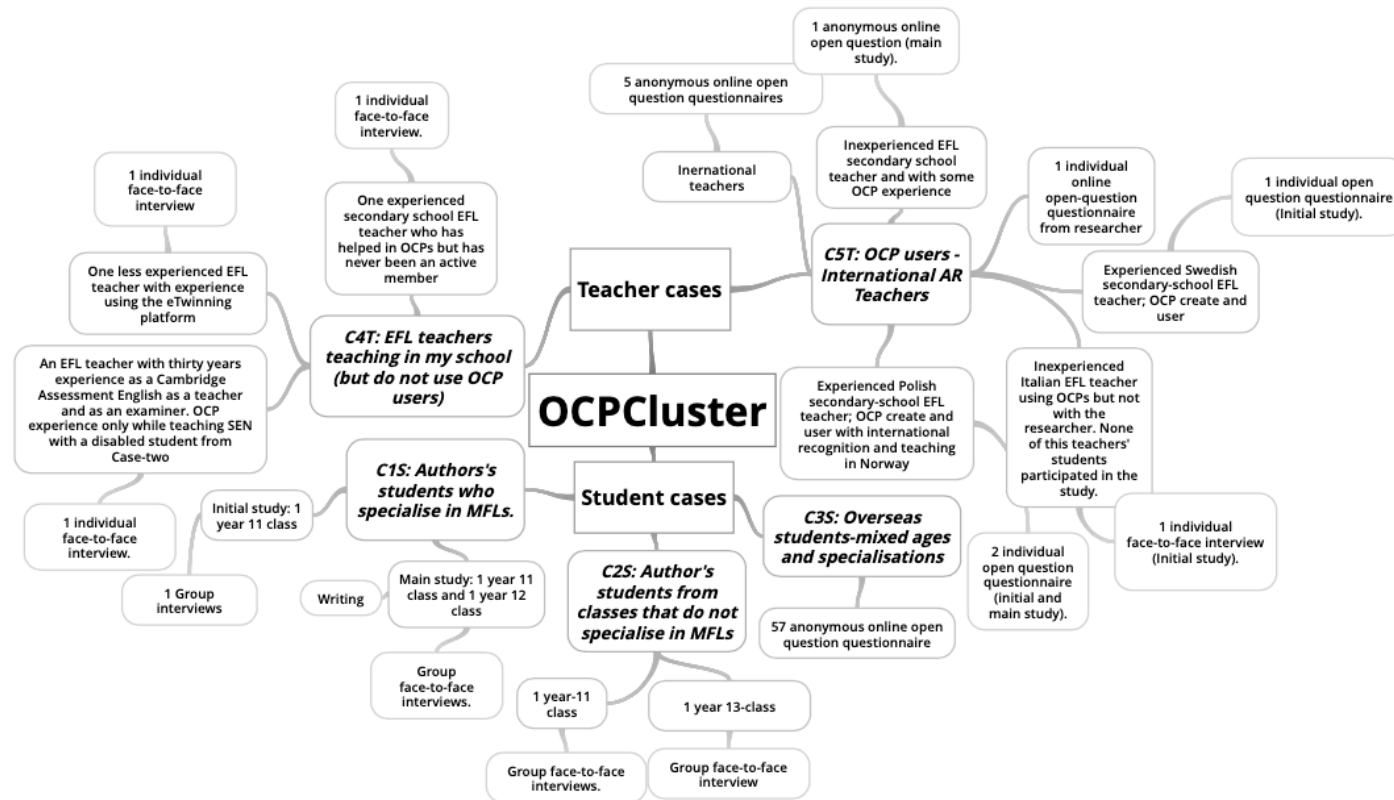
Hope this was helpful.

Love,

Appendix B.6. Interview, questionnaire and email questions and instructions.

Participants	Tools	Questions
Students	Opening questions for interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Could you describe a project that you have done in your English lesson? What do you think about using them? ◇ Could you explain how integrating OCPs in your lessons can help you to learn English? Could you give some examples please? ◇ Is there anything that you don't like about OCPs? Could you give some examples please?
	open-question questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Can you explain, using examples, what OCPs are? ◇ Can you explain, using examples, how OCPs have helped you to learn English? ◇ Can you explain, using examples, of any difficulties you have had or anything you did not like about any OCPs that you have done?
	Essay instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Your friend who lives in Norway has told you in an email that they will be doing an eTwinning OCP. Write an email to: ◇ Explain to him/her what to expect; ◇ Tell him or her about the projects you have done with your English teacher and give examples; ◇ Tell him/her what the pros and cons are; ◇ Explain how (and if) you think these projects can help you learn English; ◇ Tell your friend about the benefits/difficulties the teachers will have when they do the project with them
Teachers	open-question questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ What are your perceptions of OCPs? Can you give examples? ◇ Could you explain the effects that integrating OCPs in your EFL curriculum has had on your students' learning? ◇ In your opinion, what is the role of OCPs in your professional development? Could you give examples please? ◇ Could you explain any difficulties you have encountered? Could you give examples please?

Appendix B.7. OCPcluster



Appendix C. Ethics

Appendix C.1. Ethics table

Activity	Ethics issues	Rational and procedures
Research setting	Power issues	As far as students were concerned, since I am their teacher, I am aware that they want to please me despite my assuring them that there was no 'right' or 'wrong' answer and that I wouldn't be hurt or offended in anyway. Because of this factor, I am aware that I need to reflect upon 'unspoken' facts, such as what was not said etc.
Access and rapport	Access to site	I obtained written permission from my headmistress to use my school as a setting for my research; I obtained permission form the British Council to use the eTwinning website; Any data I use from our Twinspace platform will be limited to that we (teacher members) have saved in the public domain. Any photos will be pixilated.
	Permission and assent	Students under 18 years old were given assent forms and their parents were asked to read and sign permission forms; Teachers were given permission forms to read and sign; Parents were given permission forms for the initial study but not the main one; Anonymous online questionnaires were provided with a tick-box informing participants of the research enquiry and giving them the choice of accepting or refusing the use of their answers for the purpose of research and publication.
	Protection of participants	Names are always masked, or aliases have been assigned, with the exception of one online colleague who is happy for me to use her identity since she is a well-known successful educator; Composite participant profiles have been created so data cannot be identifiable to a particular source.
	Disclosure of findings	Remember to share findings with participants who ask for it; Attention has been paid to present multiple perspectives in order to avoid siding with participants or disclosing only positive results.
	Context and differences that need to be respected	Language was the main obstacle to this research because none of the participants were native speakers of English. For this reason, I was especially careful with my choice of words in written communication and questionnaires, and in the case of interviews, I always gave the participant the choice of which language they preferred to use.
Sampling strategy	Participants awareness	At the beginning of the study, I prepared a presentation that I showed students to make my objectives clearer to them. I also prepared information leaflets individual to each category of participants: teachers, parents, parents of minors and students.
Forms of data	Interruption of lessons	One of the biggest difficulties I encountered was time and settings. Students all had buses to catch at the end of the school day and I would not want them to sacrifice an afternoon to me. During my own time with them it was impossible due to the large number of students in my class. In the initial study it was a big problem due to my inexperience. I waited for periods when I was free and when one of their teachers were absent. This of course happened rarely and so for the initial study I only had two group interviews. On the other hand, for my main study I took advantage of the hours in which my students were doing the OCPs. When the quicker groups finished their tasks earlier, instead of giving them other ones to do, I would interview them.
	How the researcher elicits information / providing rewards	Rewards were not an option in this research and students were free to choose whether they wanted to help or not. All of them wanted to help and at the end of the study I will prepare some gadgets with the name of the study on them as a reward, but not in exchange for their help. It would seem crass and opportunistic. The same is true for the teachers. My colleagues were very happy to help but only in their periods. My online colleagues on the other hand were not so enthusiastic. We do not know each other personally but I was given enough help and from the most valuable sources.
Recording information.	How information is recorded	An audio recorder was used to record interviews and Google forms and Docs was used for the questionnaires.
Storing data	How sensitive data is stored	Attention is given to data storage. All data is stored on my personal computer (which I never take out of my house) and in my private iCloud. I never store it on portable memory sticks.

Appendix C.2. Memorandum

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

From Dr Louise Westmarland
The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
Email louise.westmarland@open.ac.uk
Extension (6) 52462
To Lesley Fearn
Project title An Enquiry into ESL and Online Community Projects in Secondary Schools
HREC ref HREC/2635/Fearn
AMS ref N/A



Memorandum

Date application submitted: 25/07/2017
Date of HREC response: 22/08/2017

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.
2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review, so they can be recorded and a favourable opinion given prior to any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is or may be effected).
3. Please include your HREC reference number in any documents or correspondence, also any publicity seeking participants or advertising your research, so it is clear that it has been reviewed by HREC and adheres to OU ethics review processes.
4. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.
5. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and where they exist, their frameworks for research ethics.
6. At the conclusion of your project, by the date you have stated in your application, you are required to provide the Committee with a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-review-process-and-proforma#final_report.

Best regards

Dr Louise Westmarland
The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C.3. Google forms tick box giving research information and the possibility to refuse

An Enquiry into EFL and Online Community Projects in Secondary Schools: Questionnaire for students

This questionnaire will contribute to a study into English language learning in secondary schools with a focus on Online Community Platforms (e.g. eTwinning) and teacher development. We would be grateful if you could contribute your experience, expertise and a few minutes of your time.

...

I agree that the information that I provide can be used for educational or research purposes, including publication *

☐ Yes

☐ Other...

Appendix C.4. Consent form for teachers

		
	An Enquiry into English as a Second language and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools	The Open University PO Box 70 Walton Hall Milton Keynes MK7 6AF Tel +44 (0) 1908 858312 www.open.ac.uk

Consent form for persons participating in a research project (Personal Data Protection Code - Legislation Decree no.196 of 30 June 2003)

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator: Lesley June Fearn

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep;
2. I understand that my participation will involve interviews and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement;
3. I acknowledge that:
 - a. The possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until it is anonymized at the point of transcription point on 28/05/2019 (by contacting Mrs. Fearn). After this point data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - c. The project is for the purpose of research;
 - d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - e. I have been informed that research data may be made available to other members of the research community including publication;

- f. If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
- g. I have been given contact details for a person whom I can contact if I have any concerns about the way in which this research project is being conducted;
- h. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to this interview being audio-recorded ☐ **yes** ☐ **no**

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings ☐ **yes** ☐ **no**

I assign the copyright for my contribution to the faculty for use in education, research and publication.

Participant signature:

Date:

Contact details for an alternative contact if you have any concerns about the way the research project is being conducted: Research supervisors dr. Matilde Gallardo (matilde.gallardo@kcl.ac.uk) and dr. Mair Lloyd (mair.lloyd@open.ac.uk).

This research has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion, from the OU Human Research Ethics Committee - HREC reference number: 2635

(<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>).

Appendix C.5. Assent form for minors

 **CREET** The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology



 **The Open University**

An Enquiry into English as a Second language and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools

The Open University
PO Box 70
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AF
Tel +44 (0) 1908 858312
www.open.ac.uk

Assent form for minors

(Personal Data Protection Code - Legislation Decree no.196 of 30 June 2003)
(Translation from Italian and NOT to be used)

The purpose of this study is to find new theory on the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. It will focus particularly on how second language learning and teacher development can be improved within an educational institution by using an online community platform for online collaboration for example, eTwinning.


For this research, we will ask you some questions about how you feel about school, social media, technology and online community projects. Questionnaires are anonymous and interviews will be done in small focus groups and we will keep all your answers anonymous so no one will know the identity of the person giving the information.


We don't think that any big problems will happen to you as part of this study, but you might feel sad if we ask about bad things that happen at school. You also might be upset if other kids see or hear your answers, but we will try to prevent this from happening. On the other hand, you can feel good about helping us to make things better for other kids who might have problems at their school.


You should know that:

- You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You won't get into any trouble with the Open University, your teacher, or the school if you say no;
- You may stop being in the study at any time (by contacting Mrs Fearn);
- If there is a question you don't want to answer, just leave it blank or tell the interviewer that you don't want to answer something during an interview;
- Your parent(s)/guardian(s) were asked if it is OK for you to be in this study. Even if they say it's OK, it is still your choice whether or not to take part;
- You can ask any questions you have, now or later. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can contact me at the above address or at: 00390875/689006 or email ljf275@my.open.ac.uk.

Appendix C.6. Information leaflet for teachers:

**CREET** The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology



**The Open University**

An Enquiry into English as a Second language and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools

L.J. Fearn
ljf275@my.open.ac.uk
Tel. +39 3480456558

The Open University PO
Box 70
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AF
Tel +44 (0) 1908
858312
www.open.ac.uk

Participants' Information Leaflet

What is the aim of this research?

The purpose of this study is to find new theory on the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. It v focus particularly on how second language learning and teacher development can be improved within an educational institution by using an online community platform for online collaboration.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

Mrs Lesley June Fearn is carrying out this research on behalf of The Open University (Milton Keynes, UK). The Centre for Research in Education and Ed Technology (CREET) is experienced in carrying out research on Technology Enhanced Learning research. We design, carry out, and analyse research in the fields of Design and analytics in learning, Learning at scale, Global and inclusive learning, shaping the future of education and professional and digital learning.

Further information about us can be found on our website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/main/our-research/education>

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as expert in Online Collaborative Platforms and language learning and teaching. For th reason we would like to invite you to participate in our research.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

We will be conducting surveys and interviews during September 2017 to February 2018. The interviews will tak approximately 30 40 minutes and would be conducted at school or via Skype, at a date and time that is convenient to you.

What will the interviews be like?

The interviews will be recorded either by video or audio (depending on what you feel comfortable with).

What will we be talking about?

We will be asking you about: your experiences of eTwinning and language learning.

Is it confidential?

Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. We will write a report of the findings from this study, but no individual will be identifiable in published results of the research.


What happens now?


Over the next few weeks, someone from CREET may contact you by email to ask if you would like to take part and, if so, ask you a few questions about yourself. We need to make sure that a cross-section of people with different experiences are included in the study and for this reason we cannot guarantee that we will see everyone who volunteers to take part, although we would hope to include most. If you would prefer not to be contacted ab this research, please let us know by email and we will not contact you again. Your participation is entirely voluntary.


What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study we would be very happy to answer them. Please contact Mrs Les June Fearn by email: ljf275@my.open.ac.uk.

Appendix C.7. Information leaflet for parents

**CREET** The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology



**The Open University**

An Enquiry into English as a Second language and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools

The Open University
PO Box 70
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AF
Tel +44 (0) 1908 858312
www.open.ac.uk

Participants' Information Leaflet for Parents

What is the aim of this research?

The purpose of this study is to find new theory on the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. It will focus particularly on how second language learning and teacher development can be improved within an educational institution by using an online community platform for online collaboration.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

Mrs Lesley June Fearn is carrying out this research on behalf of The Open University. The Centre for Research in Education and Ed Technology (CREET) is experienced in carrying out research on Technology Enhanced Learning research. We design, carry out, and analyse research in the fields of Design and analytics in learning, Learning at scale, Global and inclusive learning, shaping the future of education and professional and digital learning. Further information about us can be found on our website:
<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/main/our-research/education>.


Why is your son/daughter being invited to participate in this research?


Since your son /daughter has participated in at least one eTwinning project (eTwinning is an Online Collaborative Platform) we would like to invite him/her to participate in our research.


If my son/daughter takes part in this research, what will be involved?

We will be conducting surveys and interviews from September 2018 to February 2019 at school either in person or online via Skype (if the researcher is in another country), at a date and time that is convenient to the teachers and

Appendix C.8. Consent form for parents

**CREET** The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology



**The Open University**

An Enquiry into English as a Second language and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools

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www.open.ac.uk

Participants' Information Leaflet for Parents

What is the aim of this research?

The purpose of this study is to find new theory on the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. It will focus particularly on how second language learning and teacher development can be improved within an educational institution by using an online community platform for online collaboration.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

Mrs Lesley June Fearn is carrying out this research on behalf of The Open University. The Centre for Research in Education and Ed Technology (CREET) is experienced in carrying out research on Technology Enhanced Learning research. We design, carry out, and analyse research in the fields of Design and analytics in learning, Learning at scale, Global and inclusive learning, shaping the future of education and professional and digital learning. Further information about us can be found on our website:
<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/main/our-research/education>.

Why is your son/daughter being invited to participate in this research?

Since your son /daughter has participated in at least one eTwinning project (eTwinning is an Online Collaborative Platform) we would like to invite him/her to participate in our research.

If my son/daughter takes part in this research, what will be involved?

We will be conducting surveys and interviews from September 2018 to February 2019 at school either in person or online via Skype (if the researcher is in another country), at a date and time that is convenient to the teachers and

Appendix C.9. Letter with information to the eTwinning platform



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Lesley June Fearn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
em [REDACTED]
tel. [REDACTED]

National Support Service for eTwinning

20/07/2017

An Enquiry into English as a Second Language and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools.

Information for the eTwinning platform

Dear National Support Service for eTwinning,

My name is Lesley June Fearn and I am an EdD researcher affiliated with the Open University (Milton Keynes, UK) carrying out research with 16 - 19 -year-old schoolchildren into the learning and teaching of English as a Foreign Language and Online Community Platforms such as eTwinning. The project is being supervised by PRIMARY dr. Matilde Gallardo of the King's College, London (UK) and dr. Mair Lloyd from the Open University. From this research, insight will be gained into the extent of how can second language learning and teacher development be improved within an educational institution and by using an online community platform, with the aim of contributing to the knowledge and theory in the areas of social media, technology, online community platforms and above all, language learning and teaching skills in the global society of the twenty-first century.

I would like to use the eTwinning platform in my study where I hope to carry out questionnaires and interviews with the students and teachers with whom I have done projects over the past three years. The interviews would last for approximately 30 – 40 minutes and I will ask them questions about their experiences of eTwinning projects, language learning and online collaboration. I am also a full time English teacher in the Scuola Superiore di Secondo Grado dell'Istituto

Appendix C.10. Letter to Headteacher in Italian



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Oggetto: Ricerca sul ruolo della lingua inglese come seconda lingua e l'eTwinning a.s. 2017
– 2019: An Enquiry into ESL and Online Community Projects in Secondary Schools.

La sottoscritta Lesley June Fearn nata il 29/11/1968, [REDACTED] (EE) e residente in via [REDACTED], assunta a tempo indeterminato in qualità di docente di lingua inglese e titolare presso [REDACTED] attualmente svolgendo un progetto di ricerca con the Open University di Milton Keynes (UK)

Chiede

Di poter condurre interviste e questionari in collaborazione con gli alunni e professori del Liceo. La ricerca durerà per 2 anni scolastici e si focalizzerà sull'attività conseguita durante i progetti eTwinning e sull'uso dell'inglese come lingua straniera.

Se lei mi autorizza, chiederò anche il consenso dei genitori degli alunni. Le informazioni raccolte da tutti i partecipanti verranno mantenute anonime e conservate in modo sicuro. Solo io e il supervisore del progetto avremo accesso ai dati e, conformemente ai requisiti di alcune riviste scientifiche e organizzazioni, i dati codificati possono essere condivisi con altri ricercatori competenti.

Se c'è un ripensamento al consenso prima del momento di raccolta dei dati, gli stessi verranno distrutti. Nessuna informazione che porta all'identificazione della sua scuola o dei singoli allievi sarà inclusa in qualsiasi pubblicazione o nella distribuzione dei risultati. Il coinvolgimento della sua scuola è su base volontaria e lei può ritirare l'autorizzazione in qualsiasi momento durante il progetto.

Il progetto sarà sorvegliato da dr. Matilde Gallardo (████████████████████) del King's College London e dr. Mair Lloyd (████████████████████) dell'Open University. Da questa ricerca, si potranno acquisire le conoscenze delle Online Community Platform (eTwinning) per lo sviluppo degli insegnanti e per l'apprendimento delle lingue straniere (in particolare l'inglese) con l'obiettivo di contribuire alla teoria dei social media e delle competenze linguistiche nel mondo globale del ventunesimo secolo.

Sono a sua disposizione per ulteriori informazioni su questo progetto se lei lo riterrà opportuno.

Distinti saluti,

Lesley June Fearn



Appendix C.11. Letter from headteacher in English

Subject: Request to research: An Enquiry into ESI and Online Community Platforms in Secondary Schools.

To whom it may concern,

In response to the letter sent to me by Mrs. Lesley June Fearn, requesting the possibility to perform research and data collection in the form of recorded interviews and questionnaires with the staff and students of the [redacted] 'condaria di Secondo Grado'.

I understand that the research will be done on the premises of this secondary school [redacted] and that only Mrs Fearn and the project supervisor; dr. Gallardo and dr. Lloyd will have access to the data. However, in accordance with the requirements of some scientific journals and organisations, the coded data may be shared with other competent researchers.

If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation, the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of my school or the individual pupils will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. I may withdraw permission of my school's voluntary involvement at any time during the project.

If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.



Yours faithfully,

Appendix D. Analysis

Appendix D.1. Code book

Code Book

Main research question 1	How can online collaborative projects support the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a secondary school setting						
Main research question 2	What are teachers' and students' perceptions and beliefs about OCPs as a tool for EFL learning and teaching?						
Sub-research question 1	Teachers: what does or doesn't motivate them to use OCPs?						
Sub-research question 2	Students: how do they think that participating in these projects has helped their language skills?						
Macro-theme	Theme	Sub-theme	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5
1. Technical language skills	EFL history	EFL fluency	✓		✓	✓	✓
		Positive EFL learning aspects	✓	✓		✓	✓
		How they learnt English	✓	✓		✓	
		Why some students don't like EFL	✓	✓			
		Difficulties	✓	✓		✓	
	EFL skills				✓	✓	
2. Difficulties	Unsuccessful points	Materials			✓		✓
		Time and curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Internet connection			✓		✓
	Unsuccessful activities		✓				
	Negative aspects	Remembering things	✓		✓	✓	
3. Teachers' concerns	With the curriculum and students	Student not having the necessary skills				✓	
		Students behaving badly				✓	
		Teachers lack the necessary IT or language skills				✓	
4. Environment	Classes and communities	Working in groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Meeting people				✓		
	Perceptions and descriptions				✓	✓	✓
	Sociocultural factors						✓
5. Motivation	Interesting descriptions			✓			

Appendix D.2. Code book 2 adapted from Cresswell's example (2003, p. 191).

Theme	Shortened code name	Definition	When to use	When not to use	Examples found in Cases:				
					1	2	3	4	5
Technical language skills	EFL fluency	Any evidence of EFL history and skills: speaking, listening, research, reading, writing, IT., global skills	Use when referring to 1) how do students feel that participating in these projects has helped their language skills? 2) What are teachers' and students' perceptions about OCPs as a tool for EFL learning and teaching?		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Positive EFL learning aspects				✓	✓		✓	✓
	History				✓	✓		✓	
Difficulties	Why some students don't like EFL	Any evidence of unsuccessful points and/or suggestions on how to overcome them either in learning or teaching EFL or in using OCPs or both.	Use when referring to What are teachers' and students' perceptions about OCPs as a tool for EFL learning and teaching? 3) Why do teachers choose not to use OCPs?		✓	✓			
	Difficulties in learning EFL				✓	✓		✓	
	Materials						✓		✓
	Time and curriculum				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Internet connection				✓		✓		✓
Teachers' concerns	Students not having the necessary skills	Any evidence of concerns relating to teachers' perceptions of OCPs, such as with the curriculum, students, IT, language skills, class behaviour and closing control of the class	Use when referring to Case-four perceptions. Students also give their opinions and Case-five explain how they overcome any difficulties or otherwise the impact it has on their experiences.			✓		✓	
	Students behaving badly					✓		✓	
	Teachers lack the necessary IT or language skills							✓	
	Lack of trust				✓	✓		✓	
	Getting over difficulties								✓
Environment	Working in groups	Any evidence of references to the community settings, such as: classes and communities; Meeting people; Perceptions and descriptions; Sociocultural factors; Learning from each other.	Use when speaking about the sociocultural advantage of integrating OCPs into lessons and how they can compare (or not) to a community of practice.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Communication and seeing each other's work						✓		
	Window to the world and always something new				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Community of practice,					✓			✓
	ZPDs can form naturally					✓			✓
Motivation	Self-confidence:	Any evidence of how students are motivated, such as: Overcoming self-consciousness; Developing a positive EFL identity; Motivating EFL activities.	Use when referring to perceptions on behalf of all case and how integrating OCPs into EFL lessons can be motivating.		✓	✓	✓		✓
	EFL as a tool not as a subject;				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	change from textbooks				✓	✓	✓		✓
	teamwork				✓	✓	✓		✓
	Future work				✓	✓	✓		✓
	Marks					✓			✓
	Fun				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Important				✓	✓			✓

Appendix D.3. Codebook 3

Theme	Definition	Examples from literature
Technical language skills	Any evidence of EFL history and skills: speaking, listening, research, reading, writing, IT., global skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional material • Technology is a useful tool for socially constructed knowledge (Gajek, 2018) • online interaction has its advantages over face to face communication because it can ‘reduce social context clues related to race, gender, handicap, accent and status as well as non-verbal cues, such as frowning or hesitating (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991). • the addition of messaging and text tools whereby EFL learners can take their time and reflect on how best to approach the question in hand. research has shown that distance communication using good quality connections and networks can ‘support effective zones of proximal development’ (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2009, p.203) • it is important that learners have the possibility to write as well as to speak (Zahner et al., 2009); • tasks and activities need to be carefully chosen to promote interaction within the ZPD (Zahner et al., 2009) • an experienced teacher needs to be at hand and ready to intervene in the case of difficulty (Zahner et al., 2009). • teachers need an understanding of technology, both online and offline (Dooly, 2011) • guide learners towards ‘electronic literacy’ and constructivist ways of learning (Hampel, 2006, p.112). • research has shown that skills in all subjects can be improved by integrating ICT into lessons, but this is not always happening (Maduabuchi, 2016; Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2016; Warschauer, 2009; Townsend & Bates, 2006) • whether to teach grammar in EFL learning or to concentrate on content and thus allowing grammar forms to be assimilated in a similar way to that of first languages (Ortega, 2014; Scott, 2015; Wingate, 2016). Krashen et al., (2012), Krashen (1999) and Ellis (2003) promote second language learning through content (also called the naturalistic approach to learning) believing it is more effective than focusing on grammar structures that are absorbed subconsciously when learners take part in communicative tasks that aim at fluency over accuracy. However, second language learning is epistemologically different to that of first languages and most people learn second or foreign languages from a combination of both naturalistic and formal learning of grammar structures (Ortega, 2014). Teachers can design OCPs or adapt activities and assignments

		<p>to ‘include a focus on language’ in order to stimulate ‘curiosity and metalinguistic reflection (Guarda, 2012, p.22)’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCP teachers are free to teach whatever way they believe best for the sociocultural setting of their class having the possibility of introducing grammar structures in a creative way and for communication rather than repetitive and artificial grammar exercises (Akdemir, 2017).
Difficulties	<p>Any evidence of Unsuccessful points and/or Suggestions on how to overcome the unsuccessful points. Difficulties can be separated into difficulties in EFL and difficulties in using OCPs .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hampel (2006) believes the solution is for teachers to be aware and prepared for foreseen difficulties in advance of their lessons; • The lack of functioning equipment and technical support is often an issue in state secondary schools where teachers do not want to waste time when hardware doesn’t work, or the Internet connection is not strong enough to support the lesson (Maduabuchi, 2016; Chigona, 2014; Maftoon & Shahini, 2012) • few teachers use technology or communication focused activities in their lessons; • achievement cannot be separated from the individual’s upbringing and social context, thus learning requires activities that are meaningful to students in their everyday lives (Scimeca et al., 2018; Wingate, 2016; Scott, 2015; Dooly & Sandler, 2013; Guarda, 2012; Van Lier, 2011; Townsend & Bates, 2006; Ellis, 2003) • there is a wide gap between theory and practice meaning that while teachers have studied teaching theory during their training programme they have not been taught how to use it in the classroom or why they should be using it (Dooly & Sandler, 2013) • many L2 teachers have been socialized into believing that learning is internal to the learner and the best way to teach EFL is by aiming towards passing standardized tests. • inexperienced teachers usually rely on textbooks to determine the content and structure of their lessons (Dooly & Sandler, 2013). Frequently, textbook topics are not only boring but can even be threatening to L2 adolescents, because although they are interesting to native speakers, they mean little to the lives of those living elsewhere with different cultures and histories. • ‘the old image of the teacher with a piece of chalk and a few text books is now well in the past’ and that teachers should share their skills and experience, open their classes to each other and have time to prepare suitable curriculums together in the same way as they do while doing OCPs (Gajek, 2018) • Wingate (2016) points out that ‘fun’ lessons are not necessarily advantageous to language learning and that teachers have been ‘socialised’ into believing that lessons need to be fun without being aware of the theoretical principles that set rise to this belief. She says that teachers strain to provide ‘light

		<p>entertainment' (p.12) while trying to facilitate learning and motivate students, but this often means that EFL standards are lowered and consequently, learners feel demotivated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers work much harder than their students when providing entertaining lessons and as Scott (2015, p.4) notes; 'language is learnt better if it is the student doing the work not the teacher'. • it cannot be assumed that by communicating with other people using English as a medium, that language skills will be automatically improved (Guarda, 2012; Foster, 1998). • one of the most frequent reasons for OCP failure is when partners fail to collaborate because without support and feedback, students lose enthusiasm (Gouseti, 2013)
Teachers' concerns	Any evidence of concerns relating to teachers' perceptions of OCPs, such as with the curriculum, students, IT, language skills, class behaviour and closing control of the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Maduabuchi, 2016) suggests that they are afraid of 'losing control' (p.4) of the class because students are easily distracted by other websites or because they become over-enthusiastic with the activity and do not listen to their teachers. • teachers complain that their students behave badly when having to share devices when there is not enough equipment for particularly large classes (Chigona, 2014). • the lack of functioning equipment and technical support is often an issue in state secondary schools where teachers do not want to waste time when hardware doesn't work or the Internet connection is not strong enough to support the lesson (Maduabuchi, 2016; Chigona, 2014; Maftoon & Shahini, 2012). • adolescents are not always as technology savvy as expected and teachers often have to spend so long teaching students how to use the technology that the EFL learning gets overlooked. • time gets wasted when students lose their OCP log in details or have difficulties navigating educational social media such as eTwinning.

Motivation	Any evidence of how students are motivated, such as: Overcoming self-consciousness; Developing a positive EFL identity; Motivating EFL activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation depends upon learners believing that the activity in hand is worthwhile and this can only be done convincingly with the correct EFL standard (Ellis, 2003) and with necessary support from teachers and peers.
Professional development	Any evidence of how teachers find integrating OCPs can help (or hinder) with their professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCPs can be advantageous for teacher development because inexperienced teachers can ‘engage in ongoing activity to update and expand their professional knowledge bases or review their practices to ensure they are best meeting the learning needs of an increasingly diverse student base’ (Townsend & Bates, 2006, p.467). • Teachers’ are users and creators of knowledge, making decisions about how to teach their subjects in complex socially, culturally and historically situated contexts (Johnson, 2006). • ‘rather than separating formal knowledge and theory for teaching from the practical knowledge gained from applying ideas in action, learning communities can help teachers to take a more systemic view through critical inquiry with peers’ (Holmes, 2013, p.98). • collaborating in OCPs help teachers become digitally literate, and it can also help them develop new ideas and ways to use it as a tool for EFL learning (Gajek, 2018)
Theoretical perspectives	Any evidence of teachers’ perspectives on learning EFL e.g. Student centred, or teacher led lessons and how much weight should be given to grammar focused lessons or natural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social constructivist approach to learning is an active process and learners should be encouraged to construct knowledge independently through interactions with others during collaborative activities or conversations and building upon knowledge already absorbed in the past (Mondahl & Razmerita, 2014) by creating a positive, inspiring setting for the creation of the ZPD (Razfar et al., 2011). • one of the reasons that teachers choose not to join an OCP could be due to pressure of preparing students for exams that have little in common with social constructivist teaching methods (Gajek, 2018; Gouseti, 2013; Dooly & Eastment, 2009). • although modern teaching methods promote sharing and collaboration, assessment tests are directed at individual performance hence shared homework and test items are considered unethical and therefore unacceptable (Asterhan & Bouton, 2017). • Technology is a useful tool for socially constructed knowledge (Gajek, 2018) and research has shown that skills in all subjects can be improved by integrating ICT into lessons, but this is not always happening (Maduabuchi, 2016; Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2016; Warschauer, 2009; Townsend & Bates, 2006).

Environment	Any evidence of references to the community settings, such as: classes and communities; Meeting people; Perceptions and descriptions; Sociocultural factors; Learning from each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relationships are created that go beyond a group with a shared interest and participants need to have a clear common focus on purpose and teamwork (Holmes, 2013). • Lave & Wenger's (1991) choice to use the word 'apprenticeship' instead of socialisation situates the learner/teacher as 'being and becoming full cultural-historical participants' (p. 32) because 'the place of knowledge is within a community of practice' (p.100). • Understanding is negotiated among community members who in the case of OCPs, are groups of motivated teachers who are at different stages in their career (Gajek, 2018; Zuengler & Miller, 2006) and all with experience and knowledge to share. It is the way they take part in and organise the community in the quest to accomplish the project goals that will establish collaboration and experience in the ZPD and the resulting knowledge that will emerge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). • Sociocultural theory (SCT) research recognizes the fact that people with varied cultures and learning motives have diverse attitudes towards tasks and learning (Ellis, 2003) because knowledge emerges from social interaction that depends upon location and historical contexts. • mental process such as learning cannot be separated from the individual's sociocultural settings (Hampel, 2006). In fact, Dooly criticises Second Language Acquisition theory because it assumes 'homogeneity of language across speakers and contexts' (Dooly, 2003, p.3), • since language is not static; 'accuracy and fluency will vary, according to everyday contexts' (Dooly, 2003, p.3). Thus, a sociocultural perspective concentrates on how learners assimilate their second language (L2) through collaborative activity; whether it be online, offline or a combination of both (Lloyd, 2016; Dooly, 2011; Razfar et al., 2011; Johnson, 2006; Kern, 2006; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). • Central to SCT enquiry is the search for ways of achieving the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) used this metaphor to describe the distance between what can be learnt alone and what can be learnt with the aid of a more knowledgeable person through socialisation and imitating more knowledgeable people (Young-Scholten et al., 2013). It emerges through social interaction and collaborative activities and is in constant change as knowledge is absorbed and learners become independent (Ortega, 2014). • Ellis (2003), OCP tasks need to place an appropriate challenge whereby learners 'perform functions and use language that enables them to dynamically construct ZPDs' (p.179) while creating a virtual community of practice as language is negotiated and constructed among project partners that resembles real life in a small (multi-lingual and multicultural) scale (Gajek, 2018). Although there are different interpretations of the nature of knowledge, the right one for each group will emerge through collaboration and experience thus creating a ZPD (Townsend & Bates, 2006).
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		<p>Moreover, the use of technology is often limited to facilitating and speeding up traditional routine tasks that were already being done without the introduction of ICT or the Internet (Dooly & Sandler, 2013; Gouseti, 2013) for example ‘lesson planning, personal communication, word processing, presentation tools, and information searches’ (Blin & Munro, 2008; Drent & Meelissen, 2008; Kay & Knaack, 2005 in Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2016, p.2).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most secondary education systems all over the world want teachers to integrate ICT into their lessons therefore, they need to adopt new uses for technology (Akdemir, 2017; Dooly, 2015; Gouseti, 2013); • there has been much discussion on whether to teach grammar in EFL learning or to concentrate on content and thus allowing grammar forms to be assimilated in a similar way to that of first languages (Ortega, 2014; Scott, 2015; Wingate, 2016). • Krashen et al., (2012), Krashen (1999) and Ellis (2003) promote second language learning through content (also called the naturalistic approach to learning) believing it is more effective than focusing on grammar structures that are absorbed subconsciously when learners take part in communicative tasks that aim at fluency over accuracy. • second language learning is epistemologically different to that of first languages and most people learn second or foreign languages from a combination of both naturalistic and formal learning of grammar structures (Ortega, 2014). • Teachers can design OCPs or adapt activities and assignments to ‘include a focus on language’ in order to stimulate ‘curiosity and metalinguistic reflection (Guarda, 2012, p.22)’. • whether naturalistic or formal, OCP teacher-participants are free to teach whatever way they believe best for the sociocultural setting of their class having the possibility of introducing grammar structures in a creative way and for communication rather than repetitive and artificial grammar exercises (Akdemir, 2017).
Different kinds of OCPs	Any evidence of different kinds of OCPs , activities or future preferences.	

Appendix D.4. Initial codes

Code	Frequency
1. How teachers were motivated	32
2. Grammar vs natural	24
3. People not working	18
4. Language skills	17
5. Self confidence	17
6. Validity of OCPs	17
7. Time issues	16
8. Discussion on group work	16
9. Global-language learning	14
10. Motivation - students	13
11. Groups and sociocultural factors	13
12. No textbooks	12
13. EFL skills	11
14. Enjoyable / happy / fun	10
15. Easier vs difficult	10
16. How students feel they learn languages best	8
17. Connection / materials	7
18. Difficulties	6
19. Novelty	6
20. Positive identity	6
21. Real-life situations	5
22. Initial fears	4
Total	282

Appendix D.5. Example of memos

Memo ID	Memo	Quote
1	They all said no together could mean it is something they had already thought about	” Do you do these things with another subjects? All of them say no Source: 3c
2	Most of them like the content most, especially when it is about important issues. They help you to speak, not just about grammar - ‘questo è il punto’ (Francesca). She thinks that language projects could be good for students who don’t have ‘good relationships’ with languages because it might help them whereas content projects helps students who are already good with languages to get better and to learn new words and to practice them.	I think that a project that only talks about grammar are good for people who don't have a good relationship with language so they could be helped to understand English and the grammar better to be more fluent but the project with content are good for people who really know English quite well so they can practice with it and to discover new words about other things ” It helped me because it helped me to speak, not just talk about the grammar that is the case. I think that traditional teaching is done too much in my opinion and these ones with contents are give you an argument to talk about and they help you because you have to learn other words the end of the way to say what you want to say without being too simple ” Last year with this Erasmus project. We made a presentation about water
3	Those who did Erasmus projects loved them ‘I would do it a thousand times over’	”Can I talk about Erasmus? It is a project that we did last year and I participated in this project and I went abroad for a week to Portugal. It helped me to mature both at school and morally because by meeting other people I learned their culture their traditions and I saw new places for example the ocean, and it really made an impact on me and I would do it 1000 times again. You learn really a lot and it can change the way we are and it really made an impact on me.
4	the importance of content	it isn’t just a good way to speak in English (because you can make a presentation), but you understand topics that are existent in these days.
5	self-confidence	We had so much fun when we recorded ourselves talking about SDGs , if you are a little bit shy ,this is also a way to prove yourself that you could be more outgoing.
6	ways of learning EFL	xxxxxx- Because you don’t learn languages, you learn it by talking to other people learning about the problems of society, work problems. I think it’s more interesting and it’s also more fun to do it then just grammar ” The pros are:to know more things about the subject(English),topics about

Appendix D.6. Example of coding done with Quirkos

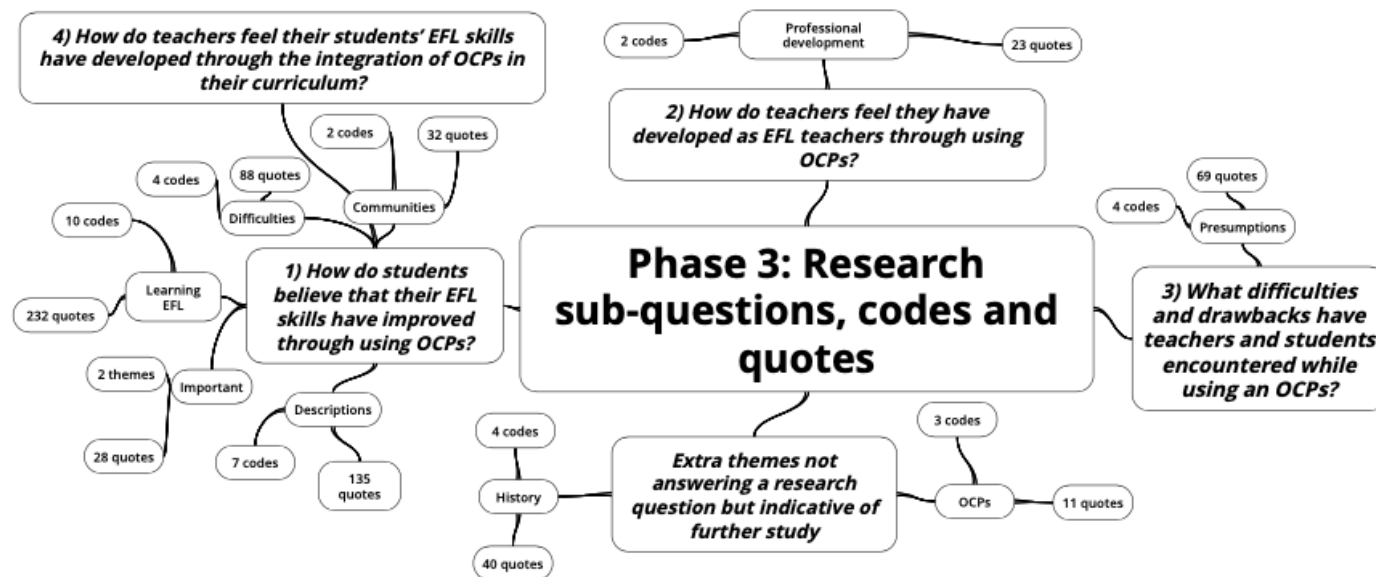
Quirks

title	quotes
content projects	24
Language projects	6
successful activities	59
unsuccessful activities	20
unsuccessful points	13
SDGs	14
Teach 2 learn	5
communities	21
learning English	62
time	35
working in groups	11
future projects	11
Positive EFL aspects	2
remembering things	10
how they learnt English	40
why some students don't learn English	19
other teachers	18
interesting descriptions	20
fun	19
students' opinion of teachers who do projects	11
curriculum	19
future and jobs	1
important	24
self-consciousness	1
Erasmus project	1
history	33
language learning	68
unsuccessful points	7
difficulties	73

Appendix D.7. Initial themes

Research Questions		Initial Themes	Codes	Quotes
1) How do students feel that participating in these projects has helped their language skills?		Communities	2	32
		Difficulties	4	88
		Learning EFL	10	232
		Important	2	28
		Descriptions	7	135
2) What are teachers' and students' perceptions about OCPs as a tool for EFL learning and teaching?		Professional development	2	23
3) Why do teachers choose not to use OCPs?		Presumptions (students and teachers)	4	69
Extra themes that did not answer a RQ	History	How they learnt English	4	40
	OCPs	Different kinds of OCPs	3	11
Total			38	658

Appendix D.8. Phase three of data analysis <<https://www.goconqr.com/en-US/mindmap/24561941/Phase-1--Sub-Research-Questions--codes-and-quote>>



Appendix D.9. Example of a theme with a sample of list of codes and quotes.

How Case 1 students think that participating in these projects has helped their language skills	
Theme - Motivation	
Codes	
too much grammar focused lessons	<p><i>Because you can't learn languages, you absorb them by talking to other people, learning about the problems of society, work problems. I think it's more interesting and it's also more fun to do it than just grammar</i></p> <p><i>Yes, there is a very big difference because in the traditional lessons most of us are very bored so if you do some projects you are inspired and you want to do more because it's a fun way to learn the language and also in traditional lessons you just sit there and when you do projects you can switch places you can also do Skype calls so I think it's nice to do projects because it gets boring doing the same thing.</i></p> <p><i>It helped me because it helped me to speak, not just talk about the grammar that is the case. I think that traditional teaching is done too much in my opinion and these ones with content are give you an argument to talk about and they help you because you have to learn other words the end of the way to say what you want to say without being too simple.</i></p> <p><i>you meet other people and you make friends from different countries, which is fantastic, and you can improve your fluency and grammar in many different and fun ways. You talk about humanitarian issues and topics that concern all of us.</i></p> <p><i>These projects helped me on the way to communicate and express my opinion in English, in fact at the beginning I wasn't keen on talking about something and express my point of view. Now I'm used to it and do it without problem; I learnt a lot of new vocabulary but honestly, I haven't learnt how to use the grammar structures correctly, so I'm looking forward to training more on that.</i></p> <p><i>because we communicate and working in books is so boring instead these are activities that are fun, and we study and learn a new way</i></p> <p><i>Yes, there is a very big difference because in the traditional lessons most of us are very bored so if you do some projects you are inspired and you want to do more because it's a fun way to learn the language and also in traditional lessons you just sit there and when you do projects you can switch places you can also do Skype calls so I think it's nice to do projects because it gets boring doing the same thing.</i></p>

	<p><i>you will lose many of your English grammar lessons, but it isn't completely correct as I told you before you will make quiz or games using grammar sure enough you are going to learn this language in a different and funnier way than the traditional one.</i></p> <p><i>With eTwinning, students must speak only English and they learn it in a more interesting way, with quiz and games, not only with books. I also appreciate it because you know students from other countries, and you learn something more about actual important problems and not only grammar that can be monotonous if you do it every single lesson.</i></p> <p><i>integrate because it helps you to know grammar better but these projects help us to put our knowledge into reality, so we really do practice with grammar and it's helpful</i></p> <p><i>Etwinning is very important for us but I think also that we must study better in class with our teachers, because to learn well languages you have to study with books and not only with computers and with these projects.</i></p> <p><i>you will lose many of your English grammar lessons but it isn't completely correct as I told you before you will make quiz or games using grammar sure enough you are going to learn this language in a different and funnier way than the traditional one. Therefore, is not a waste of time.</i></p> <p><i>I don't think so because the grammar lesson is really important. For example, if you don't know the grammar how would you speak a language? Personally, if I didn't go to another teacher that helps me with French I wouldn't have learnt what I learnt because I am just one person and our teacher couldn't be there just for me she has to teach the whole class not just me.</i></p> <p><i>We learn the grammar most. It is difficult but we can communicate via chat. We already know the basic English structures so it's easier. In comparison to others.</i></p>
Sociocultural learning	<p><i>I've loved them because they aren't only easy to do, but they help you a lot, because doing them you need competences that you may not have, so you learn how to improve on them, and I'm not just talking about English but other abilities like speaking clearly, using appropriate terms, using a computer in the right way and others.</i></p> <p><i>Having contact with other people learning the language better and breathing, not only the language, but humanity yeah, I think it's great.</i></p> <p><i>Even if we are not native speakers, this project will help you to familiarize with the language a lot, because you will feel proud of yourself using new words that you learned with this project</i></p>

	<p><i>Language is what we learnt the most because speaking to other people in other countries where their mother tongue is not English, we were able to understand each other and that was important because it means we have a good command of English and we learnt new words.</i></p> <p><i>it's like my mum asked me I don't know when, she asked me how can you improve your English with people who don't speak English, like they don't speak English every day and I didn't know how to answer because I thought the same like how can I improve my English, but we share the fact that we aren't fluent English so it is like, if I know something I will tell you that you've made a mistake and they tell me if I've made a mistake and so we improve each other's English so it's a good way to help and to be more kind of people and they make this mistake and also shy people, You can say don't worry you've made this mistake in English and I can say thank you and you've made me notice that.</i></p> <p><i>I believe that outside there is a world a very big world are not only this class but there are too many people that there at that to serve that we can listen to them and I think these projects can help us could help us, and to do to have contact with the world.</i></p> <p><i>I think doing the Skype with people that the country is very fun and very important because you get to learn about other cultures, religions other people so they are people are not just a country. It amazes me how we can understand each other in English yeah even interacting with other people don't speak who don't speak the same language even if they don't speak the same language that we are learning</i></p> <p><i>we have enriched our English with new words and also our culture because for example we didn't know that the Turkish don't eat pork meat.</i></p> <p><i>I think there are some problems with big groups because not everyone can understand each other, I like to work with him because I'm very bossy, and he always agrees with me so actually even if you don't like very much other person, actually you could learn that you can always like everyone and not everyone can like you, yeah, it's important to have social contact to improve your skills and languages and talking to people because it's not always easy</i></p> <p><i>It's true. Who wants to write, who wants to use the mouse</i></p> <p><i>It would be a bit because I would have to do everything but I think it's important that I'm with him because he speaks English very well and he does what I tell it I think it's also important to work with somebody to work with you hasn't got a high-level because you can teach them some things many things if they are willing to learn, if they're not well I have to do all the work on my own</i></p>
Inclusion	<i>In the meantime, you have fun with your mates and you'll probably became better friends. You also learn a lot of new things</i>

	<i>Yes, it did; not a lot but a bit. Because I would have spoken to Victoria or Sebastian, I wouldn't have spoken to them if it hadn't been for this project.</i>
fun	<p><i>It's also something fun to improve your English yeah I think it's useful, yeah, because if you do it in the same way, always, it gets boring, yeah, so it's something to do to improve your English or learn English in a fun way and you learn something other than English such as, for example, respect for the environment.</i></p> <p><i>yeah it's like I said you're not fixed so you don't get bored. I think it's nice because you can say speak to other people and not just with the same people.</i></p> <p><i>Because you don't learn languages, you learn it by talking to other people learning about the problems of society, work problems. I think it's more interesting and it's also more fun to do it then just grammar</i></p>
Research skills;	<p><i>We did research to find more material to find numbers, definitions, important contents then we could not just copy and paste your information, you have to find another way of saying the same thing but with your words. You have to use your words in a clear way so people can understand what you say.</i></p> <p><i>I think it helps because we research and talk about it in English, we can practice and be better</i></p>
Self-confidence and identity.	<p><i>I think we should do the Erasmus project again because I would like to take part because I think it is a beautiful experience to grow up.</i></p> <p><i>We had so much fun when we recorded ourselves talking about SDGs , if you are a little bit shy ,this is also a way to prove yourself that you could be more outgoing</i></p> <p><i>So with the Teach to Learn, we had to speak in front of a camera, so it is like a challenge for shy people (I'm not shy) but I think the fact that we have to record ourselves it's more like we don't know if the content we are talking about is right or not I don't know it's good that it's the fact that the content is more important to me,</i></p> <p><i>As I said, it's a great way to learn and improve your English, because it's not at all boring: you learn many new words and sayings, and I think that's a great way of expanding your English vocabulary. It's also very good for learning the language because you can express your opinions and you have a chance to speak a lot, so it also helps a lot if you're shy.</i></p> <p><i>Yes and that could be the motivation for the people who don't like English, they could be shy and they don't like to learning other languages because they might make mistakes.</i></p>
Different types of projects	<i>Teach to learn is a good mode to know better the English grammar: sometimes people just talk in English, without knowing the grammar.</i>

	<p><i>Teach to Learn because I like to work like a teacher so if you have to teach it you have to learn before so it is helpful to teach cos you teach to people but also you have to learn it. If you teach the people so they can learn something from you but you also have to learn it so you can teach</i></p> <p><i>I really like the projects for teenagers like, not with cyber bullying serious or something like that, I want to talk about serious projects, in English such as the problems that we have, the true problems, not the problems that adults say because I know, like older people who were young in the past, know about being teenagers but also they have forgotten so I don't want these people to be sad because we have to smile</i></p> <p><i>So the experience I enjoyed the most was Teach to Learn where we had to do videos and that was fun it was pretty like you have to teach and then you have to learn because you have to know the rules yourself you know the rules</i></p> <p><i>it isn't very difficult to do it's also interesting because it involves everyone of us and I think the STGs are my favourite parts because they say things like quality fresh air it's somethings that even in 2019 we still don't have completely in the world, so yeah, I think it's important</i></p> <p><i>they helped me very much in fact I understood the real importance because I was able to appreciate my environments</i></p> <p><i>is it helps me to understand more there are things that happen in the world and how to solve it that's important</i></p> <p><i>because they've not learnt about them from other people no one talks about them really if we don't hear about them on TV or the newspaper or the Internet. When you work about it you really know what they are and which problems are important because if you have to find materials for your arguments for your speech, you have to know more things, not just what people say around you</i></p> <p><i>they are so important because it's important to know these things</i></p> <p><i>about new projects, maybe new content like Diletta said or maybe English culture of English history not only to improve the grammar or words in English but also to improve the history that maybe that I didn't know or something like that. but also to know something like history may appear that I didn't know or something like that.</i></p> <p><i>we could discuss about history and culture (obviously in English), or we could have more hours to product. Teenagers love showing their creativity and meeting new people: so, if it's possible to add projects about art, music, or in general about talents, it would be amazing and very fun</i></p> <p><i>In my opinion the site is almost perfect, but if I have to find ways to improve it I would offer more projects, for examples creativity ones if you like art or singing to satisfy everyone's tastes. I would also meliorate the Internet network because is</i></p>
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	<i>often slow and we waste a lot of time trying to connect our devices; we have only an hour for every lesson so we would work more without this problem.</i>
Students who do not work / issues	<p><i>but you have to remember that it depends on the student because if he thinks it's a waste of time he won't do anything.</i></p> <p><i>when you work in groups, if there is somebody who doesn't work it's a problem.</i></p> <p><i>the project was good, and we knew what we were supposed to have that done but sometimes the computer didn't work on Internet that was the biggest problem.</i></p> <p><i>some difficulties; such as your classmates' laziness because they could think that these hours are equivalent to time to relax themselves. Of course I guess that all your class will do it and if your class is as numerous as mine your teacher won't be able to follow everyone so, I advise you that if you see behavior like that tell with your teacher about it 'cos it isn't right!</i></p> <p><i>I think the biggest problem was with Internet, but we managed to do it anyway.</i></p> <p><i>No, I think they did it they damaged it for themselves not for me.</i></p> <p><i>yes in fact I agree with what Julia said. It's not just that these people don't want to do anything, they not only spoil things for themselves but they spoil things for us too so you have to work twice as hard and sometimes you have to do work not just for yourself but you have to do it for them too.</i></p> <p><i>and this way the project takes longer and sometimes never finishes.</i></p> <p><i>Yes, in English you have to speak in English not in Italian. First of all if you want to learn. If they don't like languages they find it difficult and they are lazy</i></p> <p><i>But the internet connection is not always the best, actually, sometimes it's the worst and you can't do many things without a good internet connection, can you? That's the only bad thing I can find, which tells you just how good eTwinning truly is.</i></p> <p><i>Well, you know, there are no cons in this kind of projects!</i></p> <p><i>I think that a project that only talks about grammar are good for people who don't have a good relationship with language so they could be helped to understand English and the grammar better to be more fluent but the project with content are good for people who really know English quite well so they can practice with it and to discover new words about other things</i></p>

Appendix D.10. Summary of OCPCluster themes

Themes	C1S	C2S	C3S	C4T	C5T
Language and communication skills	Pleasant; Improved in grammar; speaking and fluency; comprehension; general improvement.	Pleasant; EFL easier; Grades are improved; No time wasted. General improvement. Was difficult in the past.	Pleasant; Vocabulary; Grammar; fluency; speaking; general improvement.	Students need formal grammar.	Students use all four skills; Global understanding.
Motivation	Interesting enjoyable topics; Authentic material; No textbooks; Complex structures; Self-confident identities.	Activities are not boring; Working in groups; Technology; Research.	Enjoyable activities; Communicating.	Students become more self-confident; Motivated by international peers to learn and speak.	Students become responsible for their own learning; Authentic, activities; EFL is useful.
Learning community	Sociocultural aspects; Social community aspects (having contact with other people); Social inclusion.	Helped each other to overcome difficulties.	EFL needed to converse with other countries.		.
Difficulties and teachers' concerns	Technical aspects such as internet; Lazy peers and groupwork; No difficulties	Technology but not EFL.	Anxiety; Speaking; Self-consciousness; Understanding peers; Groupwork; Not enough time; No difficulties.	Groupwork not successful with weaker students because they lack EFL skills; they behave badly and waste-time. Technology.	Inadequate tools; Others not working; Planning needed; No difficulties.
Theoretical perspectives				Cognitive grammar-focused lessons; Constructionist approach is not trusted therefore students do not learn from OCPs;	A community of practice is created; OCPs are environments where activities in the ZPD are formed naturally;
Professional development				Can learn from and teach other; Soft skills; relationship skills.	Learn from partners; Enriches practice; Improves relationships and self-confidence; Overcome technology-fears.

Appendix D.11. Research questions, themes and findings.

SRQs	Themes		Findings	=	Research question
How do students believe that their EFL skills have improved through using OCPs?	Language and communication skills;		Case-one; Case-two; Case-three		How can OCPs support the teaching and learning of EFL in secondary school settings?
	Motivation				
	Learning communities;				
How do teachers feel they have developed as EFL teachers through using OCPs?	Professional development	=	Case-four		
		=	Case-five		
What difficulties and drawbacks have teachers and students encountered while using an OCPs?	Difficulties and concerns	=	Case-one; Case-two; Case-three; Case-four Case-five	=	
How do teachers feel their students' EFL skills have developed through the integration of OCPs in their curriculum?	Language and communication skills;		Case-four Case-five		
	Motivation	=			
	Theoretical perspectives				

Appendix D.12. Quotes

1117 odes Quotes

quirkID	quirkTitle	sourceID	quote
5	unsuccessful points	7	I don't remember what we did. Oh yes, we talked about the SDG
21	curriculum	10	eTwinning is a foreign website and, if you check it online, you can realize that the website is in English, and the projects too: this should be part of foreign language curriculum, because you're taking part of foreign projects: just doing or
5	unsuccessful points	10	I have found just one effort: sometimes Internet didn't work, but I think that we can solve this little problem
5	unsuccessful points	13	Honestly, I didn't find any cons but maybe one is understanding correctly the task because sometimes is difficult understand the task of the project
5	unsuccessful points	14	the fact that you will use English to speak about some topics and that you will also do some projects about English grammar and vocabulary to improve your writing skills
5	unsuccessful points	14	sometimes you will have to research about topics that you might not like and you will have to work at home to finish your projects
5	unsuccessful points	15	cons: when I did my project ,the hours of this lessons were very short and, so, I didn't do my project in the best way ,but I am satisfied for the work that I did!
5	unsuccessful points	16	con was like usually the internet connection didn't work, but I think there wasn't any more (in my opinion)
21	curriculum	17	I think that it's very useful and it should be part of the foreign language curriculum and it's very important to do these types of projects in schools like mine, where we study a lot of languages because in this way you're always motivated
5	unsuccessful points	17	In my opinion the site is almost perfect, but if I have to find ways to improve it I would offer more projects, for examples creativity ones if you like art or singing to satisfy everyone's tastes. I would also meliorate the Internet network bec
13	Positive EFL aspects	17	
5	unsuccessful points	18	With eTwinning, students must speak only English and they learn it in a more interesting way, with quiz and games, not only with books. I also appreciate it because you know students from other courties and you learn something more
13	Positive EFL aspects	18	The cons are do a project at home, in group; so this get you a lot of time.
5	unsuccessful points	20	These projects can help you to learn English because you talk with other people that don't talk your language, so you talk with there in English and this help you so much: you can practise more with English
5	unsuccessful points	20	But it also had some negative aspects because our internet connect on never worked and it made our work difficult.
5	unsuccessful points	22	The cons are that the internet connection wasn't good, we didn't understand what they were saying and we didn't see them.
21	curriculum	23	I think that eTwinning should be part of the foreign language curriculum because for me it's useful and interesting, in fact gives us to do a video call, for example we did a video call last year with Turkish students. We also do an other pr
5	unsuccessful points	23	There are any difficulties that teachers might have from doing eTwinning for instance we have only one hour at week and we don't have much time to do it in the best way. The Internet connections is poor. In fact when we do a video cal
21	curriculum	25	you will lose many of your English grammar lessons but it isn't completely correct as I told you before you will make quiz or games using grammar sure enough you are going to learn this language in a different and funnier way than the t
5	unsuccessful points	27	· They all say about our internet connection. However, it is not just our connection which is at fault, it is other countries' connections that are not good to
29	difficulties	31	Computer programs, how to get into the website how to enter Twinspace, yeah but then you get used to it and it's easy. Internets a bit slow and it gets blocked but I've never had a problem.
33	successful points	31	Because it's on a new experience and extra experience it's not an ordinary lesson and it's useful for students to have problems. Not like when teachers speak and speak and speak and they get boring and it's a change in the routine th
33	successful points	31	Angela: I think we need to speak more at school oh yeah obviously grammar is important but if you can study grammar you forget it but when you speak you remember it. We don't usually speak at school. We don't speak much in French only i
33	successful points	29	Me do you think that you might have enjoyed this project more because we were two teachers? All of them yes M
33	successful points	29	Maria I liked the one about the verbs. We separated into groups and we wrote some verbs on a piece of paper and we uploaded them onto a video
33	successful points	29	the project that I liked best was the one about the solar system. In fact in these days we are doing a good job and I even enjoyed going to the other school to learn about the 3D printer. For me it was really interesting! I really enjoyed the
29	difficulties	29	Anthony for me the most difficult thing was using the technological aspects rather than English as a great surprise and I'd like to point that out
29	difficulties	29	Paoia I hate working with PowerPoint I prefer to buy on word document because I get fed up and I find it difficult. I like watching them that I can't make them. Alysia I had problems making videos; it was difficult to add the writing and the words with pictures. It takes a lot of time.
29	difficulties	29	yes we had some difficulties above all in making the projects but they were difficulties that you find
33	successful points	29	Anthony it's very useful because you use your knowledge and skills in real life situations in such a way that you can develop your skills from your knowledge
33	successful points	30	me and do you think it helps? Alice yes it helps because it's a new way of learning, quicker and more immediate in communicating with other people. it's more practical and fun too
33	successful points	30	Have you seen what other people have done? Alice the other projects yes, the presentations ye
29	difficulties	30	Is there anything that you don't like? Alice but the fact that some people don't take it very serious
29	difficulties	30	Sara No somethings are difficult, and some things aren'
21	curriculum	30	Sara Yes, there are some people who take these projects superficially but at the end of the day it is an hour of lesson like all the others
21	curriculum	30	Why don't you think teachers do these projects? Sara Because every teacher has their own method of teaching. It is subjective
21	curriculum	30	Alice As far as I am concerned, yes, the traditional lesson is ok, but it is always a good thing to try new methods. It catches attention. Maybe with the traditional lesson someone is not able to understand something but with a different metho
21	curriculum	30	Sara I like both kinds of lesson. The traditional one and the project one. Depends what we are learning
21	curriculum	30	Alice I think you need both, content and grammar. If you only listen to the teacher you learn things passively but you cannot talk about them. But speaking just among ourselves we might make mistakes and so we need the teacher to help u
29	difficulties	28	Giuseppe No, it's just difficult to understan
29	difficulties	28	Antonio No, no, for Me it's just the language. It is more difficult to understand than to speak

			With technology I wasn't very good, but, I slowly learns instead with the language I got better.
29	difficulties	28	Costanza As well as English we learnt to do it with technology
21	curriculum	28	Antonioria I worked with Georgia we did the present continuous tense which seems more difficult but, at the end it is not very difficult at all. Imma Yeah, it seems easier Me okay then, in your opinion, is integrating these projects in your English lessons a good thing or a bad thing
29	difficulties	28	Me Yeah, think about Dylan do you think didn't like this project? He says that he prefers working in the class than with computers. What do you think? Costanza I don't think he likes neither of them
29	difficulties	28	Imma yeah he has problems with technology. So not only he has problems with English she also has problems with technology too
29	difficulties	28	Giuseppe I think he's a bit lazy
29	difficulties	28	Antonioria because he decides on some thing and that's the way it's got to be because he's stubborn he plays too much
29	difficulties	28	Imma He likes playing Imma but perhaps he wants to show off Claudio No, it's his character
21	curriculum	28	we have had one hour a week on these projects one in three do you think it's too much not enough? All It is the right amount Giuseppe Yes, because if we do too much then we will leave school-work behind
21	curriculum	28	Me You said that because if we do too much, will leave school work behind. But what do you Mean 'school-work'? What do we need to do that is important? Giuseppe Learn stuff
21	curriculum	28	Imma if we did these projects from that from the very beginning maybe the first weeks people don't participate very much but by the end if you do, if you do it consta
21	curriculum	28	Antonioria Only to a certain extent because it becomes boring that is always the same thing
21	curriculum	28	and foreign languages? With all the languages it should be different from history and other subjects Antonioria in history we have 40 minutes of explanation and then 20 minutes interrogations. In those 40 minutes we either sleep or fista
21	curriculum	28	Imma in fact, Miss you could ask other teachers to do projects with u
29	difficulties	28	Me What about the teachers? Were they good or not? There must be a reason. Emma the teachers I don't know but I've never had good mark
29	difficulties	28	Emma I've never had a love for English not just English but for any languages that is because I find them difficult. Not in understanding other people but expressing m
29	difficulties	28	In your opinion, if in the middle school you'd done some kind of project, would you like languages more? Emma probably I would've learnt to express myself bette
29	difficulties	28	Lisa I'm the same as Imma, I've never had any passion for languages. I met the teacher Michalina in the primary school but in their middle school, the teacher single
29	difficulties	28	Lisa Well a little bit because I didn't study and when she called me, I refused to speak always so it was as though I was not there, ever
21	curriculum	28	Giuseppe Yes, I didn't study either, in fact even in the exam English was always the last subject I would study. I've been thinking about it lately though. I will need English and all of them say they like eTwinnig except one boy who was always absent when I interviewed them, and he said he preferred the traditional lesson to wor
21	curriculum	30	
33	successful points	30	· The first thing that Elvira said (who is a girl with learning difficulties and who is often isolated from the class) was how working in groups was beautiful. In fa
33	successful points	30	Sarah's favourite activity was writing about her inspiring person. She wrote about her deceased father. It gave her the chance and inspiration to share he
33	successful points	30	helps motivate. She took it for granted that others would be better in English as her. I said that that might not be true but she said that it was a reason to work!
33	successful points	30	· They noticed that grammar wasn't as difficult as they thought.
41	meeting people	33	project give us a chance to meet people from another country
41	meeting people	33	We were doing presentations , talking with people from other schoo
41	meeting people	33	For example, we had G-session when we was talking with students from other countries
29	difficulties	35	I did not have difficulty
29	difficulties	35	· Because of bad internet connection , sometimes can be connection problem
29	difficulties	35	I like all of details. There is no difficulty for me. I haven't had any difficulties or nothing I didn't like. I didn't have problems I have not had any difficulty
29	difficulties	35	the only problem was the time when we tie to communicate with other people
29	difficulties	35	I personally loved everything. I just thought that sometimes we had some problems getting together because of timezones and freetime. I think it'd be nice to p

29	difficulties	35	We should do more videocalls with other countries to get more information of how they try to improve	
29	difficulties	35	It was sometimes difficult to understand other people because we all have so different accents.	
29	difficulties	35	I hadn't difficulties.	
29	difficulties	35	We had problems talking with people from other countries	
29	difficulties	35	Sometimes the internet did not work or we did not understand each other.	
29	difficulties	35	The english because in not good speaker but i ve improved it	
29	difficulties	35	Communication with the people who don't know Ingls	
29	difficulties	35	The eTwinning project is fantastic. However, I would put an option to facetime with others foreing users	
29	difficulties	35	Some things are hard to understand	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't really had any problem	
29	difficulties	35	No, I really enjoy with eTwinning project.	
29	difficulties	35	what has cost me the most was, for example, the questions we had to ask the other classmates about their city schools... because we had very little tm	
29	difficulties	35	sometime during our g-session we had a lot of problems with conection	
29	difficulties	35	no diffcultie	
29	difficulties	35	I did like everything	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't have any problem with eTwinning project	
29	difficulties	35	I think I didn't have any problems or something I didn't like.	
29	difficulties	35	we had communication problem	
29	difficulties	35	I don't have any problems	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't have any problems	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't really have any major problems with the projects.	
29	difficulties	35	I had difficulty recording videos because of anxiety	
29	difficulties	35	It was hard to have a good communication online, due to connection problems	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't have any difficulties in this project. It was related to our subjects. I had much fun	
29	difficulties	35	There is nothing that I didn't like in this project	
29	difficulties	35	No, I didn't have any difficulties	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't have any diffcultie	
29	difficulties	35	I didn't have any diffcultie	
29	difficulties	35	No, I didn't have any diffcultie	
29	difficulties	35	Sometimes I had difficulties. For example while writing a poem I had difficulties. But our English teacher helped me	
29	difficulties	35	Online chatting gone wrong sometimes, because of the interne	
46	skills	35	The skills they felt they had improved the most were communication and grammar skills although again, all the points had been clicked especially team skills, writing skills, research skills and innovation and creativity skills. It was also	
41	meeting people	36	Most of them agreed that this project was a good way of meeting other students and that they had felt a sense of accomplishment at the end of it	
21	curriculum	36	Most of them agreed that this project was a good way of meeting other students and that they had felt a sense of accomplishment at the end of it	
41	meeting people	36	Again, all of them are happy that this project helped them meet and network with other students.	
29	difficulties	36	Maybe one of the problems is that eTwinning is not measurable. I tried to make a project which would help with the measurability of these projects but the issue was the same. The only way to integrate it into the curriculum would b	
41	meeting people	36	Communication: meet new people	
29	difficulties	36	Difficulties: most of them loved the projects and said they didn't find any difficulties. The only complaints were bad connections and lack of live sessions with partners due to time tables, time zones and Internet connections. One of the	
29	difficulties	36	Only one person complained of problems with others who do not speak English; One person complained of being stressed when having to present a topic in front of their class. This however, is an activity that the teacher chose to do. I	
50	opinions for students	39	In their learning they're not so shy when they speak and not so worried about making mistakes. Even if they make mistakes, they speak anyway. They don't usually do this because in the classroom doing traditional lessons, they are shy	
50	opinions for students	39	I think that's because they are speaking to their peers and not adults. Not only that but among peers they understand each other better. They have their own language	
50	opinions for students	39	Me So you think that it's important that they do this outside the class? Sabina Yes, because in the class they're scared of being judged or assessed whereas speaking outside the classroom they relax and by relaxing, they learn. I have an example of a student in the third year who is one of the most negative student	
50	opinions for students	39	Do you think these projects are better for good students and not so good for students with difficulties? Sabina I think for both because the good students test what they know and show off how good they are and they can improve and reach a high level of English. Instead for the student with more difficulties it can be like a language gymnasium	
29	difficulties	39	s in class it's much more difficult. It's impossible to make a gymnasium where they can speak. Either it's me who's speaking or it's them who asks me questions and it's more likely they will ask the questions in Italian. Instead with forei	
29	difficulties	39	Have you ever had any had any problems? Sabina No. As a teacher no. Maybe at the beginning I was a bit lazy and that depends on your character. I love innovation and change but I am also a bit lazy.	
50	opinions for students	39	as far as the students are concerned, they work really well, you know making presentations making posters writing summaries and reports. They do these things happily whereas if I had asked them to do a traditional essay, about anyt	
29	difficulties	39	So, the only difficulty is a balancing the ordinary work you have to do with organisation	
50	opinions for students	39	If it's a nice class it's easy, because they are predisposed towards learning languages. There are some students who seem to do everything on their own instead there are other ones which need us they need help so with difficult classe	
29	difficulties	39	There are some students who seem to do everything on their own instead there are other ones which need us they need help so with difficult classes so you have to vary your approach, sometimes using videos, sometimes a song and	
50	opinions for students	39	Actually there are really beneficial for the for the students, primarily, obviously, because instead of just using the simple textbook, they go online, they do what they have to do on the computer. Search for the words on day learn also nee	
50	opinions for students	38	Ah, a lot of the students don't know how to use the computer very well. So This is just another incentive for them to be able to practice learning something and then put it to good use	
29	difficulties	38	I should say that with the computer it becomes a little bit more difficult.	
50	opinions for students	38	But I don't really appreciate just the traditional teaching. Because I think teaching grasps a lot of other things and, this is another way of teaching, which is very good. So I'm not all against traditional teaching. But I'm also in favor of o	
29	difficulties	38	special education students like Antonio. I must say that it would certainly help him but I have to say because I wasn't here from September And I came in October it should've been reinforced again what and why he was doing these ga	
50	opinions for students	38	special education students like Antonio. I must say that it would certainly help him but I have to say because I wasn't here from September And I came in October it should've been reinforced again what and why he was doing these ga	
29	difficulties	38	he did some of them but not all of them, because it seems strange but he knows a lot of words. He's lazy and he doesn't come out with the language that maybe he knows the word	
50	opinions for students	38	what do you think you might learn Michellina well the actual use of the computer itself and then maybe putting into practice everything that goes on online I also think you can learn from other people when you did those games online. They remained impressed on the students' m	
50	opinions for students	38	Michellina I know Dylan loves rap and that's why he knows lots of word	
50	opinions for students	37	Well, I believe that they can be really effective and they can help young students to improve their knowledge of languages and I also believe that before doing these types of activities students have to have good language skills and also	
29	difficulties	37	But for weaker classes the situation was quite different because they thought it was just a way to have an hour break and so it wasn't affective. It was very effective with good classes but only with good classes	

Appendix D.13. Final cross-case analysis summary.

Theme	Case-one	Case-two	Case-three	Case-four	Case-five
Language and communication skills	Grammar was improved from activities of writing, practical communication and doing research.	Higher grades; interesting and seems easier to learn in this way; Noticed improvements in vocabulary and speaking skills	A range of communication skills including grammar, vocabulary, writing and speaking; Confirms promotional literature that EFL can be improved; One student did not learn anything.	Relationship skills; Need to have good skills prior to project and then vocabulary is improved – roots in cognitive theory; Do not really learn English (referring to grammar), only vocabulary, fluency, self-confidence and motivation to learn; Students working on the OCPs but they need to be made aware of the structures they are using.	Practice all four language skills; Language learning through writing and speaking and content; How useful English is; Authentic real-life situations; Inclusion.
Motivation,	Authentic texts and real-life communication in EFL are more motivating than textbooks; MFLs especially English is important for their futures (Intrinsically motivated to learn and therefore do so outside of school hours); Felt empowered by autonomy acquired on OCPs; Seem competent to peers or even more so.	Interesting topics and working in groups; Working in groups and teams is important for their futures; Better than textbook-driven lessons; Relaxing; Speaking to international peers – real-life situations. To understand and be understood by overseas peers; CoP, peer support in the ZPD	Enjoyable and effective activities; Real-life communication – important for their futures.	Self-confidence; When motivated, students increase their learning skills even grammar; Advanced students show off, beginners are able to practice;	Collaborative properties were a source of motivation; Became more open-minded – global skills; Enjoy the community created: connecting with skype, reading and publishing work on website; Authentic materials and situations create a CoP;

Learning communities,	<p>The learning community was useful as far as socialisation was concerned;</p> <p>Learn English by using it to communicate in relaxed environment.</p>	<p>Relaxed, low-anxiety environment;</p> <p>Learnt more from each other than with the teacher because they do not always understand and are shy of asking for clarifications;</p> <p>Peer guidance in ZPD;</p> <p>Inclusive.</p>	<p>Learn English by using it to communicate in a low-anxiety, relaxed environment;</p> <p>English is the principle tool of communication.</p>		
Difficulties and Concerns	<p>Internet but overcome;</p> <p>Time - sometimes cannot finish activities;</p> <p>Lack of peer cooperation leading to more work and a waste of time – their own loss;</p> <p>Important to work with people who they get on with (important that EFL levels are similar and that motivation to learn EFL).</p>	<p>Not as difficult as they thought, saw improvement;</p> <p>Technology was more difficult, but they overcame their problems with help from peers;</p>	<p>Anxiety, speaking in English and presenting in front of the class;</p> <p>Difficulties in understanding due to accents and levels;</p> <p>Working in groups because they were unable to make their voice heard;</p> <p>Internet.</p>	<p>Technology but not anymore;</p> <p>Extra work in preparation;</p> <p>Seems as though they don't learn much, but their self-confidence increases and their autonomy;</p> <p>Beginner classes (lazy / weaker) wasted time because they had no language skills;</p> <p>Time wasted because importance is given to teacher led cognitive style lessons where grammar is the focus.</p>	<p>Mostly, no difficulties;</p> <p>Time, fitting everything in therefore careful planning is needed;</p> <p>Some colleagues do not work well but this is considered normal;</p> <p>Materials and internet connection.</p>
Professional Development.				<p>Soft skills;</p> <p>Learn about other cultures;</p> <p>Computer and IT;</p> <p>Learn from each other – CoP;</p>	<p>Learn from motivated partners eg. Tools, methods, events;</p> <p>Creates a successful CoP;</p> <p>Transformative – encourages</p>

				Helps teachers build upon experience – otherwise they risk teaching as they were taught.	experimentation with new methods improving self-confidence and self-identity; Enriched practice; Improved self-confidence and identity.
Theoretical Perspectives	The result of past EFL teachers using a behavioural approach gives a tendency towards grammar ZPDs.	Feeling that they cannot learn EFL because it is too difficult resulting from past EFL teachers using a behavioural approach.	Krashen and Terrell's (1988) SLA theory.	Teacher-led approach; Audio-Lingual Method : behaviourist theory – repetition and memorising of structures / only correct usage accepted -as in structured exams; Reveals that = Students need a suitable challenge - unless the activity is worth doing, it will not be taken seriously	Student-centred approach; Collaborative learning and peer guidance in the ZPD; Global perspectives;

Appendix D.14. Discussion table

Sub research question	Theme	Case	Summary	Other	Notes	Answer	
1	Language and communication	C1S	Preoccupied with learning grammar	The result of an EFL learning background with a teacher who used a behavioural approach. Might have been being honest. Thomson and Gunter (2011)	All students (except one) felt they had improved their language and communication skills in some way.	All but 1 in 135 students felt they had improved their EFL skills. The OCP motivated them in various ways and they appreciated the learner-centred settings.	
		C2S	Rejection of EFL and preoccupied with marks				
		C3S	One student has learnt nothing				
	Motivating OCP aspects	C1S	Able to work within ZPDs	Interesting worthwhile topics; increase in self-confidence; authentic communication with peers and enjoyable activities	All motivated but in different ways.	The above were all influenced by social cultural and historical background that were individual to each case and determined the creation of a ZPD	
		C2S					
		C3S					
	Learning communities	C1S	All in agreement	Relaxed learning environments. Learner-centred activities were relaxing as opposed to stressful teacher led			
		C2S					
		C3S					
2	Professional development	C4T	Global awareness			All positive	All teachers either feel that OCPs have the potential for teacher development
		C5T	Enriched practice and motivation to improve further				
3	Difficulties /concerns	C1S	Time	Not enough to do activities	C1S and C2S found working in groups to be an issue whereas for C2S it was the strength; C3S listed more difficulties than the other two cases	The biggest difficulty was the time factor that was different to each group depending upon their social cultural and historical backgrounds.	
		C2S					
		C3S		OCPs waste time needed for grammar / extra work			
		C4T					
		C5T		Needs extra time for organisation			
4	Language and communication skills	C4T	General improvement; Vocabulary; Self-confidence; Global skills; Fluency and Autonomy		All positive, C5Ts list more skills than C4Ts	Although both cases felt that students were motivated to learn EFL through using OCPs, there was a sharp difference between the cases in their theoretical beliefs which led C4Ts to doubt their value for the EFL curriculum.	
		C5T					
	Motivation	C4T	Positive EFL identity and communication with peers	Motivating collaborative activities	OCPs can motivate EFL learning		
		C5T					
	Theoretical perspectives	C4T	Teacher-led	Behavioural /cognitive approaches	A distinct difference in approaches because of ontological and epistemological differences.		
		C5T	Learner-centred	Social constructivist /sociocultural theory			

Appendix D.15. OCP and AR table

Cycle One – initial study					
AR Stage	Date	OCP	Action	Cases/people involved (Regarding the final OCP Cluster)	Where
Plan	July to September 2017.		Information leaflets, consent and assent forms were prepared. An application was made to the HREC in order to obtain permission to proceed with the research	C1S and C5T	The application related to face-to-face interviews and surveys with minors, their parents and EFL teachers on the topic of learning EFL using OCPs.
		<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge.</i>	The initial research proposal intended to use an OCP that focused upon writing skills, but the researcher's partner, the teacher from Norway, preferred OCPs about content. Therefore, a group with twenty-two teachers was set up on Loomio in order to decide on a topic. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was decided upon.	<u>C1S and C5T</u> Content OCP with mainly EFL secondary school teachers <u>OCP members:</u> As far as the SDGs project was concerned, the researcher was responsible for the eTwinning OCP, while the researcher's partner created a platform on WordPress, so that it could be accessed by teachers outside of the EU All work on OCPs was done in collaboration and close communication with partners.	<u>Platforms and networks</u> The SDGs OCP was initiated for academic year 2017/2018. The group of teachers from Loomio advertised the OCP using social media platforms such as Facebook; Instagram; Twitter and specialised teaching sites such as eTwinning; TES, Edmodo and so on.
		EU: <i>Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning.</i>	The researcher's school had made an application to obtain travel funds for fifteen students to potentialize their knowledge on the EU and citizenship from the Programma Operativo Nazionale 2014-2020 (PON) Ministero	<u>C1S and C5T</u> Content OCP with mainly EFL secondary school teachers. <u>OCP members:</u> This project was managed by the researcher and teachers living in other cities and	<u>Platforms and networks</u> The EU OCP was initiated on the eTwinning platform for academic year 2017/2018, with a Special Education Needs (SEN) teacher from the same

			dell'Istruzione (2016) and so an OCP was created to strengthen the application. The application was successful and won funds for fifteen students to spend three weeks learning English in Cambridge, UK.	countries. The teachers from the researcher's workplace chose not to participate after initiation. This was mostly because the OCP was in English.	school. The OCP was advertised on the eTwinning platform and attracted another two schools in Italy as well Portugal, Ukraine and Armenia
	November 2018.	Erasmus plus project: <i>SOS-Water Sources are Alarming.</i>	This OCP was on the theme of water involving themes of Fine Art, Literature, Science, Religion, MFLs and others.	<u>CIS</u> Content OCP with secondary school EFL and STEM teachers and included transnational exchanges. Although the researcher was responsible for managing the eTwinning site, the team from the Czech Republic were the coordinators of this Erasmus project.	The countries involved in this OCP were Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, and Turkey. Most activities were carried out face-to-face.
	November 2018.	Erasmus plus project: <i>Take Stereotyping out of Your Life.</i>	This OCP was on the theme of stereotyping and tolerance. It involved subjects such as Literature, Music, Religion, Social Sciences, MFLs and others.	<u>CIS</u> Content OCP with secondary school EFL teachers and other subjects. This OCP included transnational exchanges. Although the researcher was responsible for managing the eTwinning site, the Lithuanian team were the coordinators of this Erasmus project.	Countries involved were Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Romania, and Turkey. Most activities were carried out face-to-face during transnational exchanges.
Act	November 2017.	<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge.</i>	The researcher explained about the research to her OCP partner and asked for approval to post the link on Twinspace and Loomio.	CST <u>Quantitative data:</u>	When approval was confirmed, the Likert-style surveys were sent to teachers living in other towns and

		<i>Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The survey was answered by sixteen teachers from eleven different counties, from both within and outside of the EU. <p><u>Qualitative data:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two individual open-question questionnaires from teachers collaborating with the researcher on the SDGs OCP. <p>One face-to-face interview was completed with an Italian EFL teacher who was not collaborating with the researcher at the time of the study</p>	countries using Google forms posted on Twinspace and Loomio. with a message explaining what the research was about and a tick-box giving permission to use the answers for research and publication. Students from other cities and countries were not involved in the first AR cycle of this study.
		All OCPs.	The researcher explained about the research to students in her own classes and shared two links with them on Edmodo: 1) the students' survey and 2) their parents' survey. Edmodo was used because the survey was only intended for CIS and also because students found Edmodo to be more accessible.	<p><u>CIS</u></p> <p><u>Quantitative data:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thirty-nine students between fifteen and seventeen years of age answered the students' survey as did eighteen of their parents. <p><u>Qualitative data:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One face-to-face interview was done with a group of five year-ten students at school. 	In the school where the researcher was working in the south of Italy.

	May 2018.	<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge.</i> <i>Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning.</i>	The two one-year OCPs were completed and final products were produced in the form of a summative video for the EU OCP and a collaborative Wakelet for the SDGs one.	<u>C1S and C5T</u> Students and teachers were asked to fill in an evaluation survey that was used in the initial study.	eTwinning, Edmodo, WordPress, Twitter, and Loomio.
Observe	Summer 2018.	All OCPs.	Data was analysed by the researcher using Cultural, Historical, Activity Theory (CHAT). This methodology focused specifically on the OCPs and what was happening within the OCP context.	<u>C5T</u> The teacher-participants in this first AR cycle were all OCP users and students were all motivated EFL learners.	eTwinning, Edmodo, WordPress and Loomio. The initial study was written up and the researcher realised that the research question was not being answered effectively.
		<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge</i> (Zielonka and Fearn, 2018).	This OCP had focused upon the seventeen SDGs and by the end, an enormous amount of work had been done by the teachers and students involved. The activities were organised on Twinspace as follows: <u>OCP Schedule</u> Promotional and informative material Timeline Objectives Schedule a Skype Session Twitter and other communication links		

			International groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment 1 • Assignment 2 • Assignment 3 • Assignment 4 Content Curation Teaching SDGs Netiquette Christmas greetings by post Project Evaluations Follow-up & Dissemination Quality labels & Prizes		
		<i>Second Star on the Right, Straight on 'til Morning</i> (Fearn, 2018).	This OCP had focused upon the EU and was much smaller than the one on SDGs, involving just six schools. However, all participants had contributed to the OCP. The activities were organised on Twinspace as follows: OCP Schedule Christmas card addresses Assessment Rubric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment 1-Introductions • Assignment 2-Presentations • Assignment 3-Quizzes and Online games • Assignment 4-Articles Project evaluation Final product Skype sessions		

Reflect	October – November.		<p>The results of the initial study and cycle one of this AR were not effective in answering the research question. Moreover, they replicated much of what was already known from the literature review. Therefore, it was evident that the quantitative data collected in this AR cycle should be augmented with additional qualitative data.</p> <p>In addition, the OCPs were all content-based. The researcher decided to create an OCP that focused on language for the next AR cycle.</p>	<p><u>C1S and C5T</u></p> <p>The lack of contrasting perspectives suggested the need to modify the research paradigm and to include complementary cases.</p>	<p>Although eTwinning was the most popular, practical and advantageous platform for hosting OCPs (see sections 2.2.1. and 2.3) in this study, other platforms and software were also valuable. For example, in reaching the attention of teachers outside the EU as well as the fact that some participants found the eTwinning platform difficult to use.</p>
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Cycle Two: the main study					
AR	Date	OCP	Action	Cases/people involved (Regarding the final OCPCluster)	Where
Revised plan	August and September 2018.	<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819,</i>	Two new one-year OCPs were initiated. The teachers involved in <i>Be the Change</i> wanted to continue with the SDG theme and so a new OCP was created with the same name. In addition to the almost one hundred teachers taking part in the original OCP, another hundred or more teachers joined this new one, resulting in almost two hundred teachers total. However, not all of them contributed to the online collaboration.	<u>C1S, C3S and C5T</u> Content OCP with mainly EFL secondary school teachers This project attracted almost two hundred teachers from across all continents but mostly the EU. All student-cases worked on this OCP although data was collected from just the C1S' classes at this stage.	This OCP was advertised using eTwinning and over various social media.
			A new application was made to HREC for the coming year that accounted for the addition of students living in other cities and countries to the study.		
	September 2018.	<i>Teach to Learn.</i>	The second one-year project was created by the researcher and concentrated on language and not on content. This was due to the one-sidedness of the OCPs in the initial study. It was very successful, but this fact was not pertinent to the research question. It might be a topic for future research.	<u>C1S, C3S and C5T</u> Content OCP with mainly EFL secondary school teachers.	This OCP was advertised to other teachers over Twinspace.

Act			The two Erasmus plus OCPs were continued.	Only C1S gave data regarding these OCPs because only they were involved in the transnational exchanges.	
			Two online open-question questionnaires were created using Google Forms: one for teachers collaborating on OCPs and living in other cities and countries, and another for their students. The teachers had four questions and the students had three.		The researcher checked with her main partner about the research and that asked for approval to post the link to both teachers' and students' open-question questionnaire on Twinspace. This was done in the private area for teachers.
Observe			It was observed that the Erasmus OCPs were being used for reporting the work done during the transnational mobilities and not online collaboration.		
Reflect			The data collected from the two cases that would later be called C1S and C5T, provided data that resulted biased because the students were all motivated EFL learners and the teachers were all enthusiastic OCP users. It was evident that a contrasting perspective was needed.		

Cycle 3: the final stage					
AR	Date	OCP	Action	Cases/people involved (Regarding the final OCPCluster)	Where
Revised plan	April 2019.	<i>Solar System 7.0.</i>	An OCP was required to motivate one of the classes in C2S to study physics. This OCP was initiated by a school in Croatia and involved the creation of a solar system using a 3D printer. Only this particular class participated in this OCP. As far as EFL was concerned, students worked in groups to do research on the planets in regard to science, literature, art and legend. Presentations were made to upload onto Twinspace.	C2S and a school in Croatia. The researcher was the only EFL teacher, all the others were physics and science teachers	The researcher searched for, and found, an OCP that would suit the project and the C2S' class in question using the eTwinning search option.
		All OCPs	Plans for new cases were made	C2S	These teachers were not using OCPs in their teaching at the time of the study, but they had had some experience with the eTwinning platform and Erasmus OCPs.
		None		C4T	

Act	April 2019.	All OCPs	The data for this AR cycle was collected and analysis was begun	1) C2S who were students from another course that were not specialising in MFLs and attended the same school as the researcher; 2) C3S, who were students living in other cities and countries;	
	April to May 2010.	<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819, Teach to Learn.</i>	The two 2019 one-year OCPs were completed and the final product made in the form of videos and Wakelet.	C1S and C2S	eTwinning, WordPress and Weebly
		All OCPs.	Two new cases were initiated producing the OCPCluster. Interviews were organised and carried. Out and data was collected.	1) C2S who were students from another course and who were not specialising in MFLs but attended the same school as the researcher.	
	May to June 2019.	None		2) C4T, who were teachers working at the same school as the author and had had some experience of OCPs but had chosen not to use them in their	

				curriculums at the time of study.	
		<i>Solar System 7.0.</i>	The Solar System OCP was closed and the 3D solar system was constructed using the 3D printer and put on display in the school entrance hall.	Only C2S. The Croatian team did not post anything.	The 3D solar system was hung up in the entrance hall of the school where the researcher was working.
	July to September.	All OCPs.	All qualitative data collected during the three AR cycles was analysed.	The whole OCPCluster	
	October – November 2019.	Erasmus plus OCPs.	The closing of the two Erasmus plus OCPs.		All participants uploaded their work onto the eTwinning site.
Observe	June to October 2019.	All OCPs	The closing of the OCPs. The completed platforms were observed as well as the responses and feedback from the teachers involved.	C5T	Teachers from other cities and countries collected from the eTwinning platform, WhatsApp and email.
		<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819.</i>	<p>This OCP was closed and the final organisation was observed. Activities were listed as follows and were all completed:</p> <p><u>OCP Schedule</u></p> <p>Project Partners</p> <p>Timeline</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>Online sessions</p> <p>Twitter and Microsoft Teams</p> <p>Online sessions 2018/2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment 1: introductions • Assignment 2: digital posters • Assignment 3: oral presentations 	C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T.	More than two hundred teachers from schools spanning all continents, but mostly from the EU.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 4: create public service announcements. Netiquette Project evaluations Dissemination Useful links Research questionnaires Final Product		
		<i>Teach to Learn.</i>	This OCP was closed and the final organisation of the OCP was observed. All activities were completed and listed as follows: OCP Schedule Resources and tools Timetable Logo Skype communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 1: Introductions Assignment 2: Vocabulary lists and exercises Assignment 3: Writing tasks Assignment 4: teaching grammar (Flipgrid) Assignment 5: grammar exercises Feedback - April 15th until May Beginners — A2 -B1 level Intermediate and upper intermediate — B1 - B2 level Final project: Website — language crib	C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T.	Seven countries: three from Italy, one from Sweden, two from Turkey and one from Croatia.
		<i>Solar System 7.0.</i>	This OCP was closed and the final organisation of the OCP was observed. The researcher was not the administrator	C2S.	Italy and Croatia.

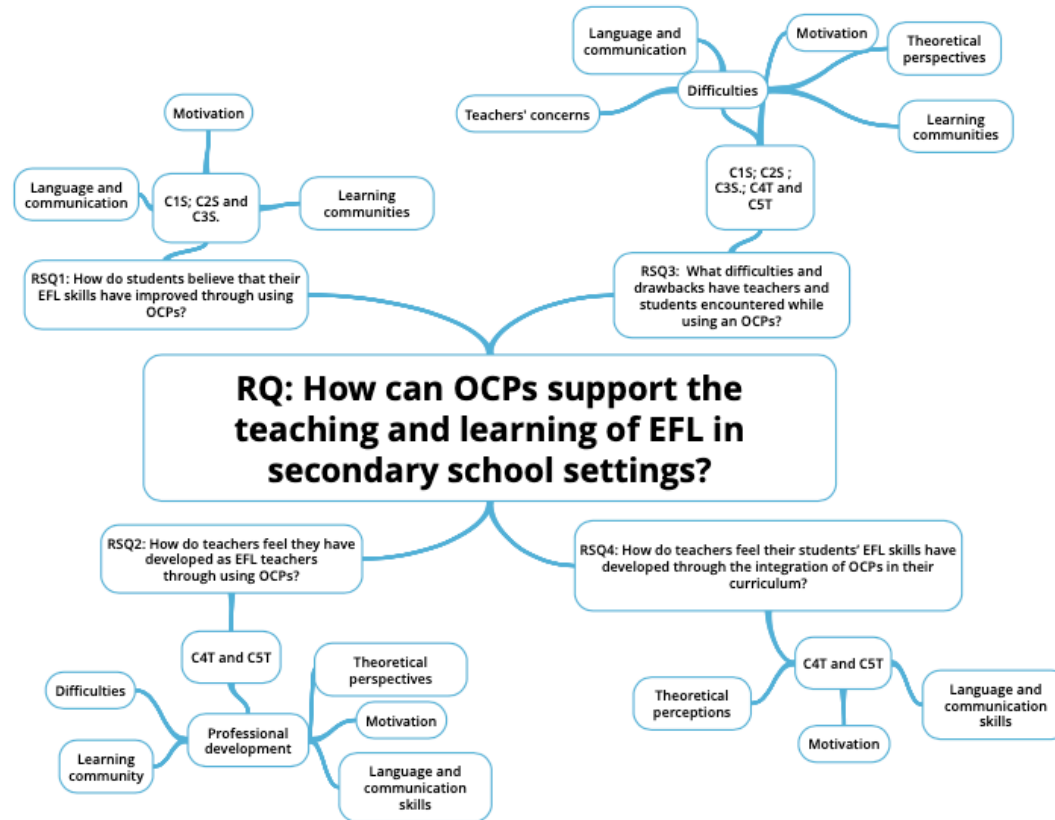
			<p>of this OCP and was not able to delete pages that were not used. The following plan was the original one and had only been completed by the Italian group. Moreover, the Geography, Biology and Latin tasks had remained unfilled:</p> <p><u>OCP Schedule</u></p> <p>Timeline</p> <p>Task 1</p> <p>Task 2</p> <p>Task 3: Final products</p> <p>Solar system data</p>		
		<p><i>SOS-Water Sources are Alarming</i> (Fearn and Hessová, 2019).</p>	<p>This OCP was from an Erasmus project. Most of the work on the OCP was posted by the teachers after the mobilities had finished. The completed activities are listed on eTwinning as follows:</p> <p><u>OCP Schedule</u></p> <p>Timeline</p> <p>Participating Schools</p> <p>Logos and contacts</p> <p>Pictures and coordinators</p> <p>Erasmus+ Corners</p> <p>Webpage links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPM in the Czech Republic • TLA in Portugal • TLA in Italy • TLA in Romania • TLA in The Czech Republic • TPM in Turkey <p>Topic presentations and MM teaching materials</p>	C1S	<p>Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, and Turkey.</p>

			Online dictionary Water charta Tourist guides Project evaluation		
		<i>Take Stereotyping out of Your Life</i> (Fearn and Salkauskiene, 2019).	<p>This OCP was from an Erasmus project. Most of the work on the OCP was posted by the teachers after the mobilities had finished. The completed activities are listed on eTwinning as follows:</p> <p><u>OCP Schedule</u></p> <p>Timeline docs and Agreements</p> <p>Christmas card addresses</p> <p>International groups</p> <p>Erasmus Corners</p> <p>Meetings with NGOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Transnational organisation meeting in Lithuania • First meeting in Italy "Stereotypical • Second meeting in Romania; • Third meeting in Slovenia; • Fourth meeting in Lithuania; • Final meeting in Turkey for teachers <p>Photos</p> <p>Language test</p> <p>Teachers' and Students' group photos</p> <p>Project evaluation</p>		
Reflect	September 2019 onwards.	<i>Be the Change, Take the Challenge 1819</i> (Zielonka and Fearn, 2019).	This one-year OCP had used the same topic for two consecutive years involving almost two-hundred teachers. However, not all of them were active. Although a great deal of collaboration and communication was done during this	C1S, C2S, C3S and C5T	Synchronous communication and was done using a variety of software but mostly Skype, and Google Hangouts.

			OCP, including both synchronous and asynchronous communication among students as well as among teachers, it did not prove to be as prolific as the previous year's OCP that had half the number of teachers. This finding suggests that there is no need to have such large numbers of teachers working on an OCP, and that an OCP is more motivating when it is about new topics.		Asynchronous communication was done using a wide range of applications such as Flipgrid, Google packages, email, eTwinning forums, WhatsApp, Kahoot and so on.
		<i>Teach to Learn</i> (Fearn, 2019).	This OCP focused upon language and not content. It was a smaller OCP than the SDGs ones and thus can be better compared to the previous year's OCP on the EU. Both OCPs were successful and inspired teachers and students to collaborate and communicate. Therefore, it would seem that the focus of the OCP does not determine its success.		
		<i>Solar System 7.0</i> (Šojat and Jukić, 2019).	This OCP was extremely popular with the C2S who took part in it. However, the only collaboration was done in the school where the researcher was working and not with the Croatian partners. Nevertheless, the fact that the students expected their work to be read by Croatian students was clearly a source of motivation, as was the collaboration between the two subjects and teachers: Physics and English. This might suggest that a CoP was produced, but in a different way to the other OCPs and not	C2S, the researcher and the physics teacher working at the same school as the author of this thesis.	3D printer, Sketchup.

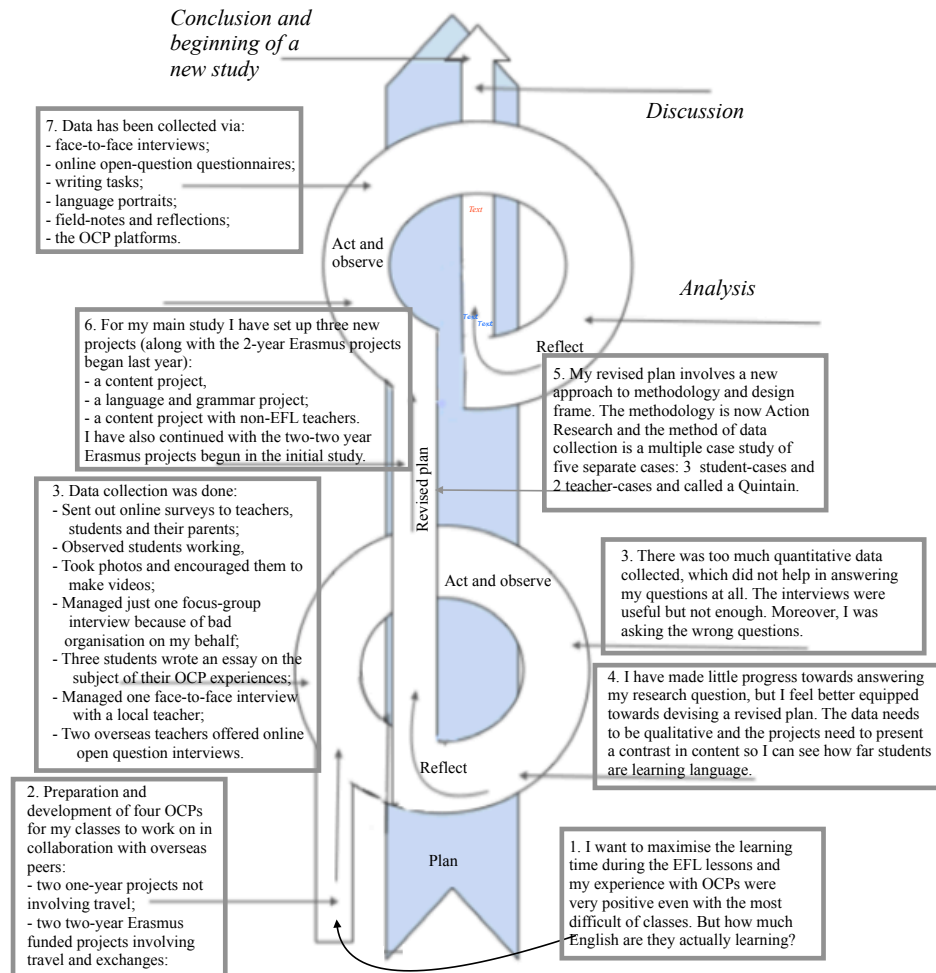
			online. The reason for the lack of collaboration and communication among schools might have been because of the difficulty of communicating in English among teachers who were not EFL teachers. Though, further research is necessary in order to gain a clearer understanding.		
		The two Erasmus plus OCPs	Despite the wealth of work reported and uploaded onto Twinspace, the results of this OCP suggest that a CoP might only have been generated when partners were together during the transnational meetings. No collaboration or communication was done on the eTwinning platform. This might be because Erasmus projects require substantial work and organisation leaving little time to encourage collaboration on OCPs.	CIS	The OCP used the Twinspace platform, but the true settings of these Erasmus projects were the Transnational mobilities.

Appendix D.16. Findings, themes and research questions.



Appendix E. Theory

Appendix E.1. Notes made on spiral adapted from Burns (1999, p. 33).



An Enquiry into EFL and Online Community Projects in Secondary School Education:

Action research methodology (adapted from Burns (1999, p.33)).

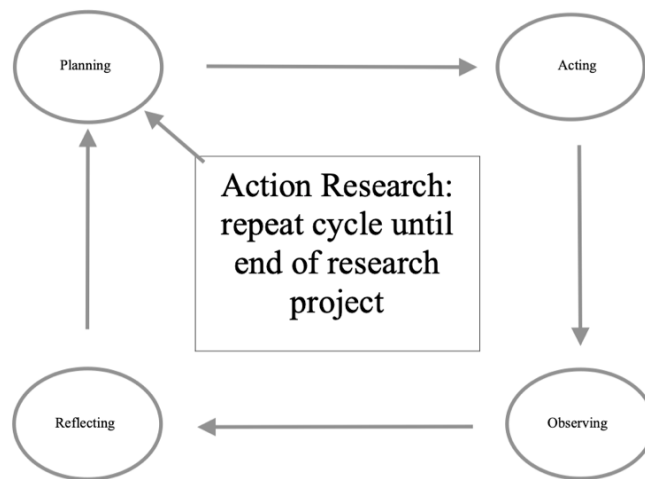
Appendix E.2. Similarities in AR and MCS (Brydon-Millar and Maguire, 2009; Cresswell, 2003; McAteer, 2014; Stake, 2006).

(Participatory) Action Research (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009; Cresswell, 2003; McAteer, 2014)	Multiple Case Studies (Stake, 2006)
Researchers have a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process	Researchers care about their study
Researchers share a commitment to action (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009).	Researchers care about case research
Researchers believe in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009).	Researchers advocate rationality.
Researchers show an ‘openly and unapologetically political approach to knowledge creation through and for action [...] in the sense of naming and unsettling relationships of power (Brydon-Miller & Maguire 2009, p.80)’.	Researchers want to be heard.
Researchers aim at improvement, emancipation change within organisations or communities (Cresswell,2003)	Researchers are distressed by underprivilege.
Researchers believe in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009).	Researchers advocate a democratic society.
The end of each cycle heralds the beginning of a new one and acts ‘as a launchpad for fresh investigations (McAteer, 2014 p.44).	Even when a study is done well, it will not be fully answered

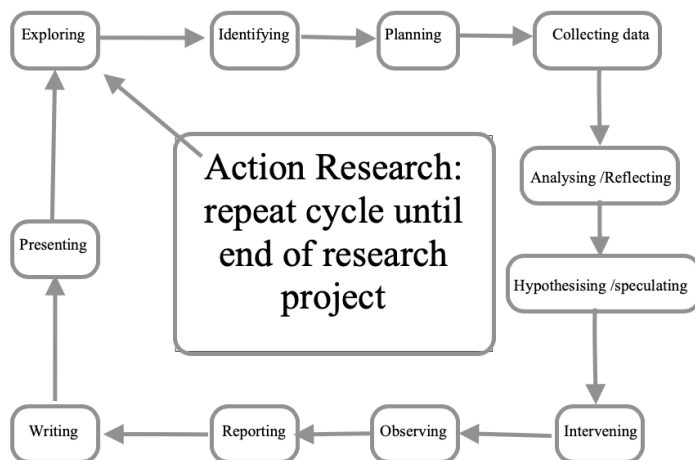
Appendix E.3. Five-stage data collection framework (Burns, 1999, p. 157-160)

Stage	Step	Explanation
1	Assembling data	<p>I made full transcripts of all the interview-recordings, translating those done in Italian;</p> <p>I downloaded the data collected from my surveys being careful to delete any (only one) survey that didn't give me permission to use for research;</p> <p>I prepared my notes and any other material such as students' essays and letters and uploaded everything onto my chosen qualitative data analysis software: Quirkos, chosen for its simplicity;</p> <p>Write memos.</p>
2	Coding data	<p>Codes emerged while reading the assembled data in separate cases;</p> <p>I merged the codes and themes to create an initial code-book;</p> <p>Write memos.</p>
3	Comparing data	<p>Reread codes under themes headings to compare for differences and similarities;</p> <p>Reread codes and themes being aware of linguistic pointers such as: 1) concept repetition; 2) local expressions; 3) metaphors and analogies; 4) Shifts in topic and content; 5) Similarities and differences; 6) Linguistic signposting; 7) absence of expected themes;</p> <p>Write memos.</p>
4	Making interpretations	<p>Interpretations are made from reading and scrutinizing data under theme headings and being open to modification or expansion;</p> <p>Write memos.</p>
5	Reporting outcomes	<p>Examples of outcomes are selected from data to strengthen, validate and highlight report findings. Reflexivity will be constant throughout all steps;</p> <p>Write memos.</p>

Appendix E.4. Two main AR cycles adapted from Altrichter et.al. (2002, p. 130)
and Burns (1999, p. 35)



AR cycle adapted from Altrichter et. Al. (2002, p. 130)

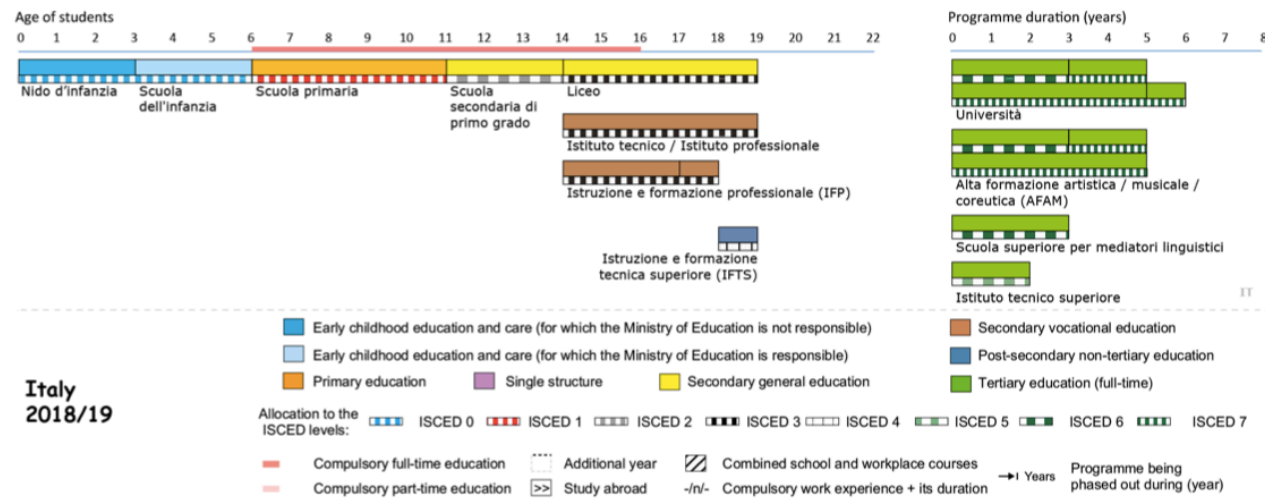


AR cycle adapted from Burns (1999, p. 35)

Appendix F. Italian school-system

Appendix F.1. Italian state school system (European Commission, 2015)

Structure of the national education system



Source: Eurydice 2018/19

Appendix F.2. Teaching time for the Liceo delle Scienze Umane and Liceo Economico Sociale (INDIRE, 2014, p. 50).

Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in human sciences, main path ⁽¹⁾ (*Liceo delle scienze umane*)

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	99	99	66	66	66
<i>(not included in the economic-social option¹)</i>					
History and geography	99	99			
History			66	66	66
Philosophy			99	99	99
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>			66	66	66
Human sciences (2)	132	132	165	165	165
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	99	99	99	99	99
Law and economy	66	66	-	-	-
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	99	99	99	99	99
Foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
2nd foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
Mathematics	99	99	66	66	66
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	99	99	99	99	99
Physics	-	-	66	66	66
Natural sciences	66	66	66	66	66
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	66	66	-	-	-
History of art	-	-	66	66	66
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	891	891	990	990	990

⁽¹⁾ The *liceo* specialising in human sciences may also offer an economics/social studies option, which differs slightly from the main programme. Differences are shown in Italics.

⁽²⁾ Includes anthropology, pedagogy (replaced by 'methods of research' in the economics/social studies option), psychology, sociology.

Appendix F.3. Teaching time for the Liceo Linguistico (INDIRE, 2014, p. 47).

Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in languages (*Liceo linguistico*)

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language	66	66			
1st foreign language and culture(1)	132	132	99	99	99
2nd language and culture(1)	99	99	132	132	132
3rd language and culture(1)	99	99	132	132	132
History and geography	99	99			
History			66	66	66
Philosophy			66	66	66
Mathematics	99	99	66	66	66
Physics			66	66	66
Natural sciences	66	66	66	66	66
History of art			66	66	66
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	891	891	891	891	891

(1) Includes 33 hours/year of conversation with a native speaker teacher.

Appendix F.4. Age equivalents in the UK and Italy Adapted from A.S.M (N.D.)

Age	The UK –	Italy	USA/Canada/Australia/ India/ Korea/ Japan
5	Year 1	asilo	
6	Year 2	1 ^a elementari	Grade 1
7	Year 3	2 ^a elementari	Grade 2
8	Year 4	3 ^a elementari	Grade 3
9	Year 5	4 ^a elementari	Grade 4
10	Year 6	5 ^a elementari	Grade 5
11	Year 7	1 ^a media	Grade 6
12	Year 8	2 ^a media	Grade 7
13	Year 9	3 ^a media	Grade 8
14	Year 10	1 liceo	Grade 9
15	Year 11	2 liceo	Grade 10
16	Year 12	3 liceo	Grade 11
17	Year 13	4 liceo	Grade 12
18		5 liceo	

Adapted from A.S.M (N.D.).